

At the Edge of Two Empires

The Economy of Cyprus between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (650s–800s CE)

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From *Arsenic and Old Lace* to a New Methodological Approach to the History of Cyprus in Transition

In Frank Capra's classic black comedy *Arsenic and Old Lace*, Cary Grant's character discovers on the eve of his honeymoon that his two elderly aunts have been poisoning lonely old men in order to help them find peace. He also finds that his delusional stepbrother, in the belief that he is President Theodore Roosevelt single-handedly digging the Panama Canal, has been burying them in the cellar. The two ladies appear at first to be harmless eccentrics, with a penchant for lace, but they are nevertheless cold-blooded killers.

Those watching this movie may be struck by the resemblance to historiographic approaches to the history of Cyprus between ca. 650 and 800. On the one hand, one should consider the traditional and conservative tack proposed in the 1960s by scholars such as Andreas Dikigoropoulos, Costas Kyrris, and Vassos Karageorghis, and more recently by A. H. S. Megaw and D. M. Metcalf;¹ it focused primarily on a

chronological tripartition that includes two periods of prosperity and a golden age of urban life. In this view the first period stretches from the late fifth until the early seventh century, the second from the so-called Byzantine *reconquista* in 965 CE to the Third Crusade in 1192; they are separated by the ruinous Arab raids of the mid-seventh century, which ushered the island into three centuries of impoverishment.² The middle phase was supposedly characterized by the division of sovereignty between the Umayyads and the Byzantines, when Cyprus was alternately labeled a condominium,

amendments. Finally my thanks go to the whole community of the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, where I spent nine wonderful and very productive weeks as Summer Fellow.

1 A. Dikigoropoulos, "Cyprus betwixt Greeks and Saracens, A.D. 647–965" (Ph.D. diss., Oxford, 1961); C. P. Kyrris, *History of Cyprus* (Nicosia, 1985); V. Karageorghis, *Salamis: Recent Discoveries in Cyprus* (New York, 1969); A. H. S. Megaw, "The Campanopetra Reconsidered: The Pilgrimage Church of the Apostle Barnabas," in *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization, in Honour of Sir Steven Runciman*, ed. E. Jeffreys (Cambridge, 2006), 394–404; A. H. S. Megaw, *Kourion: Excavations at the Episcopal Precinct* (Washington, D.C., 2007); D. M. Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus, 491–1191* (Nicosia, 2009).

2 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 567–82; E. Malamut, *Les îles de l'Empire byzantin 8^e–12^e siècles*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1988), passim; C. Mango, "Chypre carrefour du monde Byzantin," in idem, *Byzantium and Its Image: History and Culture of the Byzantine Empire and Its Heritage* (London, 1984), 3–13.

☛ This article is dedicated to my wife Federica, to my daughter Sofia, and to John and Carla Nesbitt. Their support and affection have been invaluable to me. For this I can only say that they are and always will be in my heart. I also want to express my gratitude to Professor Chris Wickham, Professor Peregrine Horden, Dr. Aysu Dincer, Dr. Matthew Harpster, and Professor Margaret Mullett, for having read and thoroughly commented on earlier versions of this paper; my warmest thanks also go to Dr. Jonathan Shea for having patiently supported my work. I would also like to thank Hawley Kusch for her careful reading and numerous linguistic

buffer zone, or no-man's-land.³ The result was repeated destruction, the end of urban life, a relocation of Cypriots to inland settlements with fundamental changes in land use patterns,⁴ the ruralization of economic life, and the social and demographic dislocation of elites, the ecclesiastical hierarchies, and the rest of the population.⁵

On the other hand, behind the lace curtains of this long-established approach, one can detect a mounting sense of its inadequacy for grasping the historical development of Cyprus in the period under consideration and the thrill still stirred by the island's peculiar political and social situation. This reevaluation indubitably stems from the new cross-disciplinary methods of analysis of an ever-widening body of archaeological data on the production and distribution of and trade in goods during the seventh and eighth centuries,⁶ a process that takes as its model the concept of smooth transition proposed for Syria and Palestine.⁷ But it also stems from a reassessment of the very concept of transition. Rather than using it to deny the idea of a crisis or to provide a synonym for transformation without tensions, scholars have recently

adopted the term to compare different social, political, and economic forms with no teleological implications: a transition is a time of passage between two periods, when conditions are ripe for a change in the socioeconomic system as framed within the changing political and administrative imperial superstructure.⁸ Hegel states in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that the standard by which we measure a situation and establish that it is problematic is itself part of the problem and should be abandoned.⁹ Indeed, the so-called Cyprus problem—that is, the division of the island after 1974¹⁰—has often impinged on and loomed over an objective interpretation of the transitional period under consideration.

Rather than recognizing that historiography is a constructive effort, meant to expose the past as it really was,¹¹ the narrative of Cyprus in the passage from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages has fallen to the subjectivism of a structured representation of modern policy as projected into the past. This has led some scholars (Kyrris and Metcalf among them) to offer a peculiar (mis)interpretation of the so-called condominium years¹²—that is, the aftermath of the

3 Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*; A. H. S. Megaw, "Betwixt Greeks and Saracens," in *Acts of the International Archaeological Symposium "Cyprus between the Orient and the Occident,"* ed. V. Karageorghis (Nicosia, 1986), 505–19; Av. Cameron, "Cyprus at the Time of the Arab Conquest," *Cyprus Historical Review* 1 (1992): 27–49; R. J. H. Jenkins, "Cyprus between Byzantium and Islam, A.D. 688–965," in *Studies Presented to D. M. Robinson*, vol. 2 (St. Louis, 1953), 1006–14; S. Vryonis, Jr., *Byzantine Cyprus* (Nicosia, 1990). See also M. Mansouri, *Chypre dans les sources arabes médiévales* (Nicosia, 2002); and V. Christides, *The Image of Cyprus in the Arabic Sources* (Nicosia, 2006).

4 J. Feifer and P. P. Hayes, "Ancient Akamas and the Abandonment of Sites in Seventh Century Cyprus," in *Visitors, Immigrants, and Invaders in Cyprus*, ed. P. W. Wallace (Albany, N.Y., 1995), 68; M. C. McClellan and M. L. Rautman, "Where Have All the Farmers Gone? The Cypriot Countryside in the Seventh to Tenth Century," in Wallace, *Visitors, Immigrants and Invaders in Cyprus*, 85–86.

5 A. Guillou, "La géographie historique de l'île de Chypre pendant le période byzantine (IV^e–XII^e s.)," *Études Balkaniques* 5 (1998): 9–32.

6 A. Walmsley, "Coinage and the Economy of Syria-Palestine in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries CE," in *Money, Power and Politics in Early Islamic Syria: A Review of Current Debates*, ed. J. Haldon (Burlington, Vt., 2010), 21.

7 A. Walmsley, "Economic Developments and the Nature of Settlement in the Towns and Countryside of Syria-Palestine, ca. 565–800," *DOP* 61 (2008): 518; idem, *Early Islamic Syria: An Archaeological Assessment* (London, 2007).

8 A. Giardina, "Perspectives on Roman History," in *Marxist History-Writing for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. C. Wickham (Oxford, 2007), 29–30; on the imperial superstructure, see L. Zavagno, *Cities in Transition: Urbanism in Byzantium between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, BAR International Series 2030 (Oxford, 2009), 10–53.

9 G. Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. A. Miller (Oxford, 1979), 16.

10 In 1974 Turkish military forces occupied the northern part of Cyprus (approximately 38 percent of the island); as a result the territory and its government (referred to as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to distinguish it from the Republic of Cyprus in the south) is not recognized internationally as an independent country by any state but Turkey. The presence of the Turkish military in northern Cyprus suddenly froze all archaeological surveys and excavations on this part of the island, which are now subject to the regulations of UNESCO's Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, or the Hague Convention of 1954 (procedures designed to protect cultural properties from accidental destruction when caught between warring parties): M. Harpster, "Maritime Archaeology and Maritime Heritage Protection in the Disputed Territory of Northern Cyprus," *Journal of Maritime Archaeology* 3 (2008): 4, 7–8.

11 N. Chomsky and I. Pappé, *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War against the Palestinians*, ed. F. Barat (Chicago, 2010), 20.

12 For a summary of the diverse scholarly opinions on the matter, see L. Zavagno, "Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens: Coins and

Arab invasions as regulated by the notorious treaty between Justinian II and ‘Abd-al Malik dated to 686–88 CE.¹³ The raids, dated to 649 and to 653, supposedly brought Cyprus to the front line of an offensive war between two camps and caused a dramatic decline in material culture and urban civilization,¹⁴ a demographic collapse, and an economic downturn. Recently this gloomy picture has been partially amended,¹⁵ yet it seems clear that often the tension of the present encroaches on the narrative of the past. Metcalf, for instance, states that “the key to interpreting [much] of the detailed evidence [is] that conditions were not uniform throughout the island. Although this is not mentioned in the treaty, the north fought back, even in the interval between the two invasions. Thereafter it resisted Arab encroachment, and a Byzantine administration was maintained there, i.e. to the north of the Pentadaktylos range.”¹⁶ This conclusion, which is not supported either by the terms of the treaty or by any other evidence, reflects the gravitational pull of the current situation on the island. Although misleading, Metcalf’s argument against using the term *condominium*, as well as his emphasis on the fact that the Byzantines never ceased

to have sovereign rights over the island, as supported by sigillographic and numismatic evidence,¹⁷ partially help to tilt the interpretive balance away from more modern historiographical impulses.

Others, however, do not escape the temptation to impose twentieth-century attitudes on seventh-century conditions. Kyrris, for instance, states (again, with almost no evidence) that beginning in 653 CE the Arabs imposed a regime of military control over part of the island, resulting in a mixture of neutrality, buffer, and condominium; moreover, he also stresses that the real feelings of the local population, whom he anachronistically calls Greek Cypriots, were aggressively pro-Byzantine to the point that they took revenge for the humiliation of the treaty by demolishing a mosque soon after the withdrawal of the Arab garrison from Paphos.¹⁸ It seems obvious that until very recently at least, the representation of the events of 1974 has at times influenced the academic world and, consequently, the perception of the period under consideration. This influence, in turn, has also led scholars like Dikigoropoulos to linger over the idea of the island as independent and neglected by the central government between the late seventh and early tenth century, again mirroring the current inability of the Republic of Cyprus to enforce its sovereignty over the north.¹⁹ The role of Christianity has also been exalted: following the breakdown of the Byzantine administration of Cyprus in the second half of the seventh century and the imposition of neutrality on the island, the most important, indeed the sole, heir of Byzantine authority

Coinage in Cyprus in the Seventh and Eighth Century,” *Byzantion* 81 (2011): 470.

13 Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1885), 2:363, trans. C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, A.D. 284–813* (Oxford, 1997), 507. On the Arab invasions of Cyprus, see R. Browning, “Byzantium and Islam in Cyprus in the Early Middle Ages,” *Epetiris* 9 (1977–79): 101–16; Cameron, “Cyprus”; Megaw, “Betwixt Greeks and Saracens”; E. Chrysos, “Cyprus in Early Byzantine Times,” in *The Sweet Land of Cyprus: Papers Given at the Twenty-Fifth Jubilee Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March 1991*, ed. A. A. M. Bryer and G. S. Gheorghallides (Nicosia, 1993), 3–14; Dikigoropoulos, “Cyprus betwixt Greeks and Saracens”; C. P. Kyrris, “The Nature of the Arab-Byzantine Relations,” *Graeco-Arabica* 3 (1984): 149–75; and Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 395–418 (the latter with further and updated bibliography on the *status quaestionis*). The exact date of the new treaty is disputed because of the sources’ inconsistency regarding chronology: Browning, “Byzantium and Islam,” 105; see also Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 416–18; Cameron, “Cyprus,” 43–46; Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 177–80; Mansouri, *Chypre*, 29–31.

14 *Byzantine Medieval Cyprus*, ed. D. Papanikola-Bakirtzis and M. Iacovou (Nicosia, 1998), 9–20; Chrysos, “Cyprus,” 10.

15 S. Hadjisavvas, *Cyprus: Crossroads of Civilizations* (Nicosia, 2010), 211.

16 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 428.

17 Ibid., 69–182; D. Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals from Cyprus* (Nicosia, 2004); idem, *Coinage as Evidence for the Changing Prosperity of Cyprus in Byzantine and Medieval Times* (Nicosia, 2003).

18 C. P. Kyrris, “Cyprus, Byzantium and the Arabs from the Mid-7th to the Early 8th Century,” in *Oriente e Occidente fra Medioevo ed età moderna: Studi in onore di Geo Pistarino*, ed. L. Balletto, 2 vols. (Genoa, 1997), 2:628, 640; the episode is mentioned by al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb futūḥ al-buldān* 13.235, ed. and trans. P. K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, 2 vols. (New York, 1916), 1:238, who however reports two different versions of the withdrawal (in the second, the destruction was brought about by the garrison); it goes without saying that Balādhurī, like all the primary sources of the period, must be used carefully and critically; see on this J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010); Mansouri, *Chypre*; and Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, with further bibliography.

19 Dikigoropoulos, “Cyprus betwixt Greeks and Saracens”; Jenkins, “Cyprus”; Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 576.

in Cyprus must have been the church.²⁰ Christianity acted as the only important symbol anchoring a sense of Cypriot identity and bolstering spiritual commonalities with Constantinople.²¹ It thereby contributed to the (supposed) role of the island as a bulwark of the iconodule party during iconoclasm.²² The Cypriots allegedly shared not only the same religion but also the language, art, and customs of the people of Constantinople: they suffered from the Arab raids because they offered no assistance to the invaders, always seeking the right opportunity to reunite with the empire.²³

As will be seen, the theory that early medieval Cyprus was an island separated from its Byzantine “motherland” has indeed been put into question by analysis of the sigillographic evidence and an attentive reassessment of the documentary and literary sources, which point both to the continuous role of the local church and to the persistence of imperial officials and local elites.²⁴ Cyprus was neither neglected by nor peripheral to the Byzantine state, to whose administrative, bureaucratic, and fiscal apparatus it remained integral. Moreover, it remained of a piece with the Byzantine state and nonstate economy.²⁵ I will return to this point in the next few pages. Suffice it for now to say that the narrative of a peripheral Cyprus that was neglected by the empire but nevertheless remained adamantly within the Byzantine ecclesiastical and

cultural koine²⁶ is wedded to the modern perception of the recent history of the island as “faraway, [yet] so close” to the two “motherlands of its people.”²⁷ These are felt by turn as incumbent and hostile presences or as sharing the same flag, history, and ancestors. As one Greek Cypriot has recently observed, “There were many kinds of Greece and Turkey, those diverse societies with complex cultures, despite those who claim they only came in sealed, pure, homogeneous packages, with nothing in common. For much of the twentieth century, western archaeologists who also tried to keep the ‘West’ well apart from the ‘East’ had presented Cyprus as a buffer separating the two.”²⁸

It seems to me that with this caveat in mind, and aware of the gap between the traditional approach and the often ruinous interference with the narrative concerning Cyprus in the so-called Dark Ages,²⁹ it may finally be possible to move from the “usual standard” and propose a complex but coherent picture of the fate of the island during the passage from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages, based on a refinement of the archaeological evidence (mainly coins and ceramics,³⁰

20 A. I. Dikigoropoulos, “The Church of Cyprus during the Period of the Arab Wars, A.D. 649–965,” *GOTR* 11 (1965–66): 264. On the role of Christianity more generally, see A. H. S. Megaw, “Byzantine Architecture and Decoration in Cyprus: Metropolitan or Provincial?” *DOP* 28 (1974): 68; B. Englezakis, “The Church of Cyprus in the Byzantine Empire (AD 330–1191),” in idem, *Studies on the History of the Church of Cyprus, 4th–20th Centuries*, trans. N. Russell, ed. S. and M. Ioannou (Aldershot, 1995), 41–61; Guillou, “La géographie historique,” 25–30.

21 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 306.

22 A. I. Dikigoropoulos, “The Political Status of Cyprus, A.D. 648–965,” *RDAC* (1940–48): 94–110; Englezakis, “Church of Cyprus,” 60. A more neutral slant is that of Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 441–46.

23 Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 6.

24 Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals*; for the earlier theory, see Malamut, *Les îles* (n. 2 above), 567; Guillou, “La géographie historique,” 30–32.

25 L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History* (Cambridge, 2011), 459–75.

26 Mango, “Chypre carrefour” (n. 2 above), 6: “That this [Cypriot] population was largely Greek-speaking I have no doubt”; Vryonis, *Byzantine Cyprus* (n. 3 above), 7: “Despite the fact that Cyprus had slipped from the exclusive political domination of the Byzantines the culture of the Cypriotes and consequently of Cyprus did not cease to be clearly Byzantine in language, art, and religion.”

27 With these phrases I am referring to another movie, this one by Wim Wenders (1993), and to a famous documentary by Costas M. Constantinou and Giorgos Kykkou Skordis (2011) that explains Cypriot cultural and ethnic polarization by portraying the difficult survival of the Maronite community, squeezed as it is between Greek and Turkish identities.

28 Y. Papadakis, *Echoes from the Dead Zone: Across the Cyprus Divide* (London, 2005), 237.

29 It is not by chance that the real interest in the Republic stirred by the problems of medieval Cyprus, uninterrupted since the 1950s, with plenty of Greek Cypriot scholars approaching the manifold architectural, artistic, historiographic, archaeological, and social aspects of the period, mirrors the almost complete neglect of the cultural heritage in northern Cyprus, where the only existing academic departments of history and of arts and archaeology have been closed down and no local (Turkish Cypriot) scholar conducts any research on the issue of medieval Cyprus.

30 P. Armstrong, “Trade in the East Mediterranean in the 8th Century,” in *Byzantine Trade 4th–12th Centuries: The Archaeology of Local, Regional and International Exchange: Papers of the Thirty-Eighth Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St. John’s College, University of Oxford, March 2004*, ed. M. M. Mango (Oxford, 2009), 157–78; Zavagno, “Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens” (n. 12 above).

but also seals, glass, and other material culture) as paired with a detailed analysis of Arab, Syrian, and Byzantine primary sources. Sketching such a picture is problematic, as almost one-third of the island—owing to its peculiar political situation—has evaded scientific archaeological investigation for the past thirty-eight years, a fact almost always overlooked by scholars and by publications and conferences on Byzantine Cyprus.³¹ In my opinion, no noncircumstantial conclusions about the economic, social, political, or even cultural trajectories of Cyprus between the seventh and the ninth centuries can be drawn if one fails to recognize that the territory escaping modern and stratigraphically aware archaeological investigation includes the late antique and Byzantine capital of the island (Salamis-Constantia), two urban centers in which residential building and economic activities had already been documented during the late seventh and early eighth centuries (Soloι and Kyrenia),³² the important fortifications along the Pentadaktylos range (St. Hilarion, Buffavento, and Kantara), and finally the Karpas peninsula, where some churches that remained in use well into the eighth century have been restored and documented (see figs. 1 and 2).³³

31 For instance, in his recent *Byzantine Cyprus*, Metcalf fails to mention that the northern part of the Cypriot territory has been out of investigative scope since 1974 and, therefore, his analysis of urban archaeology is based on the (re)classification and analysis of the scant material unearthed by earlier archaeological expeditions. Another important recent contribution focused on the archaeology and history of the island, M. Campagnolo and M. Martiniani-Reber's *From Aphrodite to Melusine: Reflections on Archaeology and the History of Cyprus* (Paris, 2007), completely ignores the Byzantine period; similarly, participants at the CAARI conference "Cyprus and the Balance of the Empires: From Justinian to the Coeur de Lion" (Nicosia, November 2010) barely mentioned the lack of evidence coming from the "occupied North" when discussing and drawing conclusions on the historical (and archaeological) trajectories of the island between the 7th and the 9th century.

32 I hesitate to include Lapithos-Lapta among the sites showing vitality in this period, simply because we have no information on the fate of the urban settlement apart from a large collection of lead seals (Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, 63–64) and the so-called Lambousa treasures, which include the famous David Plates (see Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 51–59, with detailed bibliography) dated to the first quarter of the 7th century.

33 For a detailed description and analysis of the churches of the peninsula, see T. Papacostas, "Byzantine Cyprus: The Testimony of Its Churches, 650–1200" (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1999), 145–61; Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 472–74; A. H. S. Megaw, "Three Vaulted Basilicas in Cyprus," *JHS* 66 (1946): 46–56; C. A. Stewart, "Domes

First, this new approach should inevitably build on the work of those scholars—such as Tassos Papacostas, Marcus Rautman, Athanassios Papageorgiou, and more recently Pamela Armstrong³⁴—who have correctly pointed out that urban and rural life on Cyprus was not dislocated by the Arab raids, that the ethnic and religious composition of the local population did not change, and that the Cypriot economy did not falter until the middle of the eighth century; in these ways, one can fully grasp how the passage from the Byzantine to the Umayyad era was similar in terms of political structures and, above all, material culture to the "smooth transition" experienced by contemporary Syria and Palestine.³⁵ Here too, for instance, we face the "puzzling dichotomy between the many known types and frequencies of transitional coins known through the antiquities market and the lower numbers recovered through archaeological work."³⁶ Also as in Cyprus, we long suffered from practical limitations (poorly excavated material and lack of publication) that initially hampered our knowledge of seventh- and eighth-century ceramic chronology or typology.³⁷ In most Cypriot excavations, Rautman notes, "the relative scarcity of diagnostic material has hindered the identification of chronologically related artifacts."³⁸ In Syria and Palestine, these obstacles eventually were confronted and overcome, as is just beginning to happen in Cyprus, where a revised chronology of local ceramic productions in the village of Kalavassos-Kopetra has enabled scholars to demonstrate that "an empty landscape after the seventh century was not a

of Heaven: The Domed Basilicas of Cyprus" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2008), 22–90; and Megaw, "Byzantine Architecture," 61–78. For the other sites, see below.

34 Papacostas, "Byzantine Cyprus"; M. Rautman, "Handmade Pottery and Social Change: The View from Late Roman Cyprus," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 11.1 (1998): 81–104; A. Papageorgiou, "Cities and Countryside at the End of Antiquity and the Beginning of the Middle Ages in Cyprus," in Bryer and Georghallides, *Sweet Land of Cyprus* (n. 13 above), 27–51; Armstrong, "Trade," 168–78.

35 Papacostas, "Byzantine Cyprus," 217.

36 Walmsley, "Coinage and the Economy of Syria-Palestine" (n. 6 above), 25. For Cyprus, see M. Fehlmann, "Looting and Losing," in *Fostered by Its Shores*, ed. O. Çaykent and L. Zavagno, forthcoming.

37 Walmsley, "Economic Developments" (n. 7 above), 320–21.

38 Rautman, "Handmade Pottery," 84.



FIG. 1. Main Cypriot urban sites mentioned in this article (author's archive)

realistic state of affairs";³⁹ we will see that far-reaching exchange networks included the island.⁴⁰

Second, recent research in adjoining regions (both Syria-Palestine and southern Asia Minor)⁴¹ should be compared with the analysis of the political, social, and economic situation of the other Mediterranean islands (Crete, Malta, Sicily, and even the Balearics)⁴² still

under Byzantine control. Such a comparison would prove instead that the transformations in the seventh- and eighth-century economic structures, institutional orders, and social identities were less pronounced than previously thought. Sicily, for instance, continued to play a prominent role in imperial priorities, as a strategic hub (especially after the loss of Africa) along the shipping routes across the Tyrrhenian sea and the

39 Armstrong, "Trade," 168; on Kalavassos-Kopetra, see Rautman, "Handmade Pottery," 89–90.

40 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 505.

41 On Isauria, see G. Varinlioglu, "Living in a Marginal Environment: Rural Habitat and Landscape in Southeastern Isauria," *DOP* 61 (2007): 287–317; for a general survey of the relationship between Asia Minor and Cyprus, see Papacostas, "Byzantine Cyprus," 184–208; on Syria, see Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria* (n. 7 above).

42 On Sicily, see V. Prigent, "Le rôle des provinces d'Occident dans l'approvisionnement de Constantinople (618–717): Témoignages numismatique et sigillographique," *Mélanges Ecole*

Francaise de Rome 118, no. 2 (2006): 269–89; idem, "La circulation monétaire en Sicile (VI^e–VII^e siècle)," in *The Insular System in the Byzantine Mediterranean*, ed. E. Zanini, forthcoming; on Malta, see B. Brunella, *L'Arcipelago Maltese in età Romana e Bizantina* (Bari, 2004); on the Balearics, see J. Signes Codoñer, "Bizancio y las islas Baleares en los siglos VIII y IX," in *Mallorca y Bizancio*, ed. R. Durán Tapia, Asociación de Amigos del Castillo de San Carlos, Cuaderno de Historia 2 (Palma de Mallorca, 2004), 45–101; idem, "Bis wann waren die Balearen byzantinisch?" in *Byzantina Mediterranea: Festschrift für Johannes Koder*, ed. K. Belke (Vienna, 2007), 597–604; on Crete, see D. Tzougarakis, *Byzantine Crete: From the 5th Century to the Venetian Conquest* (Heraklion, 1988), and Zavagno, *Cities in Transition* (n. 8 above), 67–90.

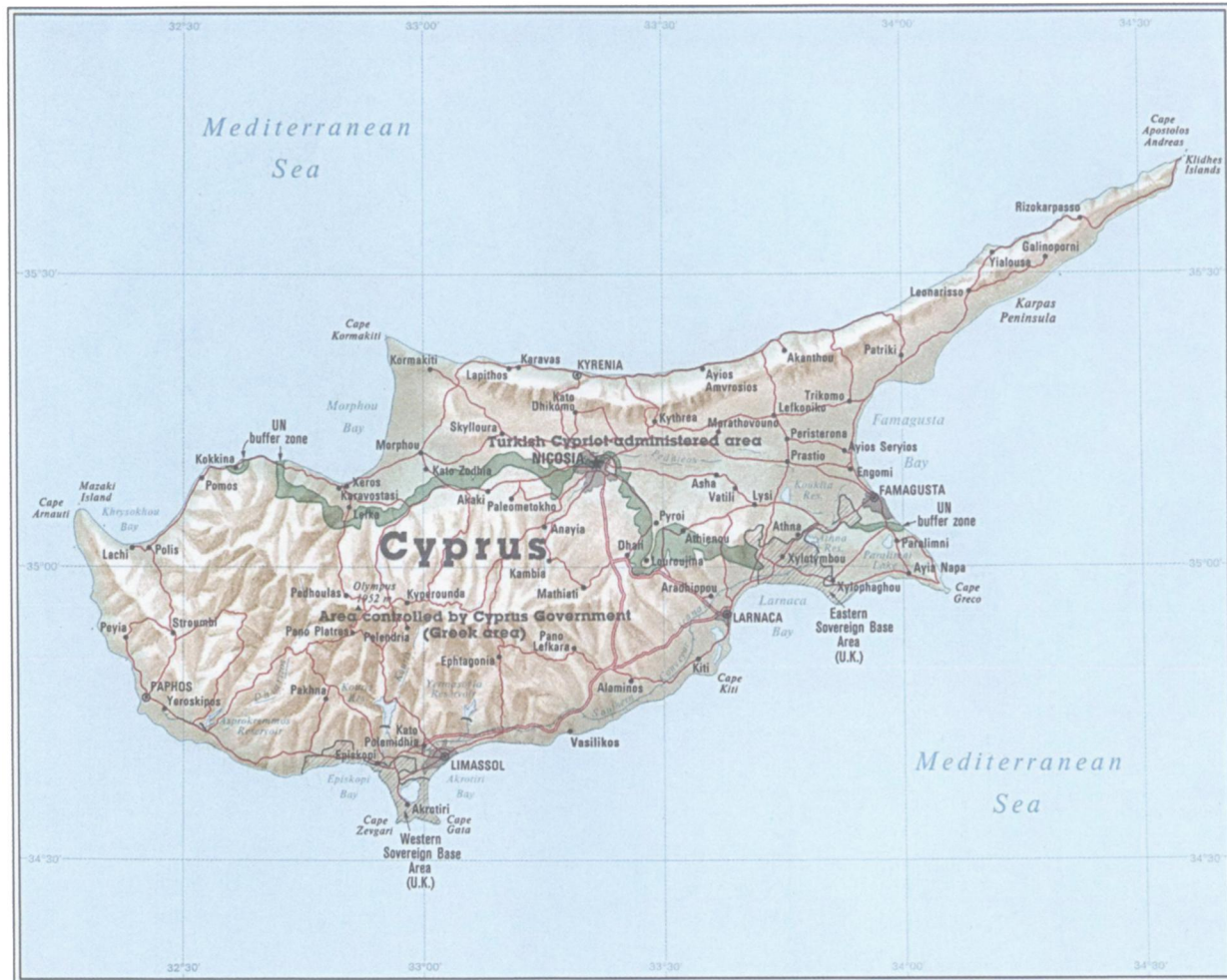


FIG. 2. Map of Cyprus showing the buffer zone between the Republic of Cyprus and the occupied territories (courtesy of Vidiani.com)

Ionian coasts;⁴³ as a military stronghold, as indicated by the appearance of a *strategos* at a relatively early date (ca. 700);⁴⁴ and finally as a secure source for grain for Constantinople after the disruption of the Egyptian tax spine.⁴⁵ The changes in monetary circulation in Sicily (and possibly in Cyprus and Crete as well; see

43 M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, AD 300–900* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), 320–54.

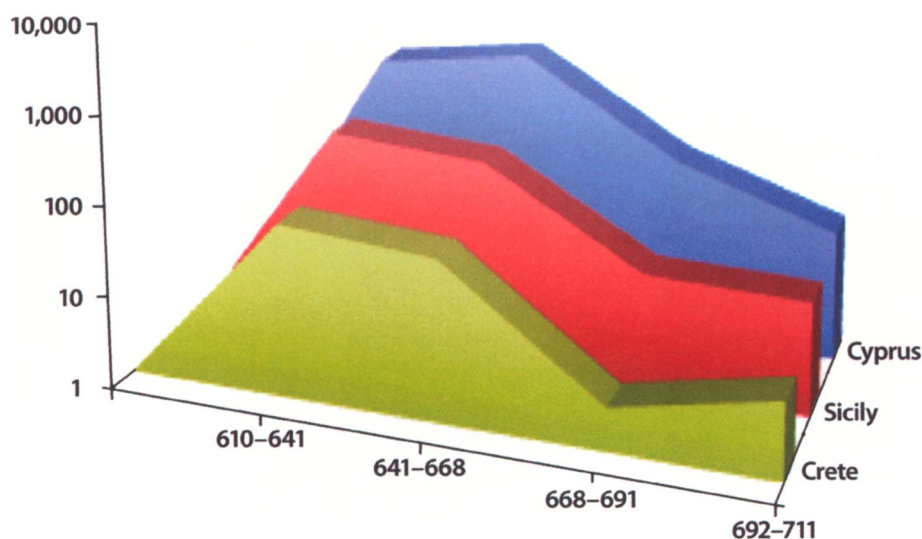
44 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 492–94.

45 Prigent, “Le rôle des provinces,” 298–99; C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford, 2005), 780–94.

fig. 3) from the late seventh century onward owed less to an economic maelstrom than to the revised fiscal needs of the state.⁴⁶ We again have a situation

46 Zavagno, “Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens,” 462–67; Prigent, “Le rôle des provinces,” 299: “Une telle réforme fiscale expliquerait d’ailleurs assez bien que l’empereur ait pu simultanément quadrupler le poids du follis, les exigences du système fiscal n’appelant plus d’émissions massives de bronze pour ‘rendre la monnaie’ aux contribuables.” This fiscal reform hinged on the new mechanism of collection of “les denrées nécessaires à l’approvisionnement de Constantinople, susceptible de s’être substitué à l’administration de l’annone. Je vois ce système 1) financé par la synonè/commercium/coemptio, dans le cas sicilien, par des achats en vieilles monnaies de bronze contre marquées, 2) placé sous l’autorité des commerciaires en Afrique et, en Sicilie, d’un service

FIG. 3. Number of copper coins minted 610–711 found in Cyprus, Sicily, and Crete (drawn by author)



that (although more from a state-driven perspective) parallels the Syrian-Palestine regional context, where it is “questionable . . . whether a demonetized economy was structurally frail and less resilient to shock. . . . [A]lternative explanations can also be sought in realigning and adaptive economic strategies by local communities. . . . Evidence for what has been termed the ‘ruralization’ of the urban environment must be offset against [other types of eighth-century evidence].”⁴⁷ Most probably we are witnessing persistence in levels of wealth, though stemming from and expressed within the local civic, military, and ecclesiastical elites in a different lifestyle.⁴⁸ A similar pattern could hold true in Cyprus, which lies within sight of the Syrian and southern Anatolian coast and shared administrative, fiscal, military, social, and economic features with the other islands of the empire.⁴⁹

faisant usage d’un sceau malheureusement impersonnel (rapellant d’ailleurs celui, postérieur, des basilica kommerkia d’époque isaurienne), 3) doté, au moins à partir du règne de Constant II (641–668) d’un système de fret vers le capital reposant sur une forme de ‘corvées’ ou du moins de contrats forcés entre l’état et les armateurs des provinces d’Occident” (Prigent, “Le rôle des provinces,” 298); see also idem, “La circulation monétaire en Sicile.”

47 Walmsley, “Coinage and the Economy of Syria-Palestine,” 39–40.

48 Ibid., 40.

49 One should for instance consider the notorious episode concerning the Cypriot Phangoumeis (a family of local notables) reported by Constantine Porphyrogenetos as participating in a Byzantine embassy to Baghdad; see *De administrando imperio* (hereafter *DAI*), chap. 47, ed. Gy. Moravcsik and trans. R. J. H.

Provided that an entirely different approach is adopted when analyzing the new archaeological evidence from recent excavations and also reassessing old publications of sites on the northern part of the island, some key questions can be answered. These key questions will be tackled in this article, though with the unavoidable caveats of any scholar working in the period concerning the dearth of primary sources.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, it seems to me possible to use these very questions to provide an innovative methodological frame for picturing Cyprus from the mid-seventh to the mid-ninth century. We are looking at a story of continuity and slow transformation in its economy, which in turn mirrors a coherent institutional and fiscal (state) order. This coherence can be observed in the vitality of the commercial exchange (linked with the Levant, Egypt, and southern Asia Minor as well as Constantinople and the Aegean), in the persistence of the importance of the local clergy and the archbishopric (also as a reference point along the pilgrimage routes of the eastern Mediterranean), and in the resistance of the local elites, both military and civic, which still experienced the political pull of the

Jenkins (1967; reprint, Washington, D.C., 1993), 224. On this episode, see also Signes Codoñer, “Bizancio y las islas Baleares,” 35–38, and below.

50 As summarized in Mansouri, *Chypre* (n. 3 above); Christides, *Image of Cyprus* (n. 3 above); H. Pohlsander, *Sources for the History of Cyprus*, vol. 7, *Greek Texts of the Fourth to Thirteenth Centuries* (Albany, N.Y., 2006).

Constantinopolitan court in affirming their social status and cultural self-identity.

Was the Cypriot economy in disarray, or, as indicated by recent groundbreaking contributions in ceramics,⁵¹ is it more likely that we have not so far been able to trace and correctly classify the material culture produced on the island? Did the monetary economy disappear, or is it more accurate to see different types of coins (like the so-called Arab-Byzantine coins) as pointing to a continuity of commercial activities? Did urban centers simply fade away and populations shelter on the mainland from the Arab storm, or could it be that the lack of recent archaeological excavation in important sites like Salamis-Constantia, Soloi, and Lapithos-Lapta makes a clear view of urbanism on the island impossible? Did the Cypriot elites really turn to a rural lifestyle, or could it be that what might be called an imperial-landowning elite (modeled on the ruling class in Syria and Palestine) continued to exist and remain urban-oriented after the Arab raids, influencing levels of local demand and production? How were the Byzantine state and its administrative structures affected by the sharing of fiscal income with the Arabs? Did Cyprus become a no-man's-land, a buffer zone *ante litteram*, or may the Arab influx have developed along different social, economic, and cultural lines than has been previously thought (for instance, influencing the development of urban fabric as at Gortyn in Crete or Pella in Palestine)? May the dynamics of adaptation of the local community have been similar to those proposed for Syria and Palestine (and therefore less divisive and more socially and culturally cohesive)?

All these questions inevitably lie at the core of this article, which ideally picks up where Papacostas left off when offering his summary on the sixth- and seventh-century Cypriot economy, urban life, and rural settlement patterns.⁵² My intent is to move away

from the supposed catastrophe of the Arab raids, while also focusing attention on the so-called long eighth century as a smooth turning point in the pattern of production, consumption, and distribution of resources and administration, pairing the situation in Cyprus with economic developments in Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and the nearby central Mediterranean.⁵³ It is true that in the first half of the ninth century, Cyprus did not experience any systemic change or suffer from elements of cultural discontinuity such as those found in the Levant;⁵⁴ beginning with the revolt of 805 CE, the equilibrium between the two powers exercising a peaceful role in Cyprus was threatened but not broken.⁵⁵ The island remained central within the shipping routes carrying goods and people from the Levantine coast to the island (such as those Palestinian monks and laymen fleeing the “misdeeds” of the Arabs in 812/13 or the Egyptian ‘Abd al-Rahman, buried in Cyprus in 780)⁵⁶ and vice versa (such as sailors and probably merchants journeying from Cyprus to Gabala in Syria).⁵⁷

As will be seen, through Cyprus one may try to reconcile two opposing views: the focus on the long string of growth in the background of persistent Mediterranean connectivity (as highlighted by Horden and Purcell and, in part, McCormick) and the alternative approach based on the rise and fall of levels of demand as underpinned by aristocratic spending

29th May, 1999, ed. S. Kingsley and M. Decker (Oxford, 2001), 107–28.

53 J. Haldon, “Greater Syria in the Seventh Century: Context and Background,” in Haldon, *Money, Power and Politics in Early Islamic Syria* (n. 6 above), 11. On the long eighth century, see I. L. Hansen and C. Wickham, *The Long Eighth Century: Production, Distribution, Demand* (Leiden, 2000).

54 Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria*, 69.

55 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 358; Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus* (n. 1 above), 439–41. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 482–83; trans. Mango and Scott, 661, 663 (n. 13 above), recounts that Hārūn al-Rashīd, the Abbasid caliph, invaded the Roman country and captured forts and cities along the frontier, raiding as far as Ancyra; few months later, when the emperor Nikephoros ignored the terms of peace to which he had agreed after this act of war, the governor of Syria, Humaid b. Mayuf, was dispatched to Cyprus at the head of a fleet that ravaged the island, destroyed the church, and deported 16,000 Cypriots to Raqqa.

56 The funeral inscription mentioning him is reported in Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 55. On the monks and laymen, see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 499; trans. Mango and Scott, 683.

57 Mansi, 13:78–80.

51 Armstrong, “Trade”; M. Touma, “Chypre: Céramique et problèmes,” in *Οι σκοτεινοί αιώνες του Βυζαντίου: (7ος–9ος αι.)*, ed. E. Kountoura-Galake (Athens, 2001), 267–91; R. Smadar Gabrieli, M. P. Jackson, and A. Kaldeli, “Stumbling into the Darkness: Trade and Life in Post-Roman Cyprus,” in *LRCW 2: Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean: Archaeology and Archeometry*, ed. M. Bonifay and J.-C. Trégliat, BAR International Series 1662 (Oxford, 2007), 791–801.

52 T. Papacostas, “The Economy of Late Antique Cyprus,” in *Economy and Exchange in the Eastern Mediterranean during Late Antiquity: Proceedings of a Conference at Somerville College, Oxford*,

powers (as assumed by Wickham and Haldon).⁵⁸ Here, we are piercing the barrier between late antiquity and the early Middle Ages as defined by the gap between two prosperous “trade cycles.”⁵⁹ In examining the marked regional decline in supraregional trade and exchange beginning in the mid-seventh century (with a nadir in the mid-eighth) and the slow recovery starting in the 850s,⁶⁰ one notes with surprise that Cyprus seems to only partially fit into this interpretive picture. It maintained strategic relevance for the Constantinopolitan administration while at the same time lying at the intersection of three regional economies and acting as a stepping-stone for cross-frontier and long-distance exchange:⁶¹ an island in transition at the periphery of two empires.

Political-Ecclesiastical History and the Institutional Profile: The Deep Impact on the “Cypriot State Economy”

When assessing the role played by the state in economic activity, one is inevitably forced to assess the relationship between the “fiscal economy,” represented by the extraction and redistribution of resources on the part of the tax-collecting machinery, and society, particularly the elite, as well as the role of individuals in moving wealth by means of market exchange (as increasingly regionalized and localized).⁶² In Cyprus this approach inevitably stirs muddy historiographic waters, because of the political status of the island: the dispute over the institutional and territorial effects of the Arab incursion is long and still unresolved. It also inevitably involves the complex issue of a methodological critique of the Arab sources (as recently summarized

by Howard-Johnston and Mansouri, among others).⁶³ Unfortunately, there is no space here for a detailed discussion of the reliability of the different Arab traditions or selections and arrangements of *isnads* (chain of authoritative narratives) on the part of such later Muslim historians as al-Balādhurī (whose *Origins of the Islamic State* dates to the second half of the ninth century) and al-Ṭabarī (writing in the tenth century).⁶⁴ I will merely note that a historiographic assessment of different available traditions is essential, and underscore the benefits of such a comparison.⁶⁵

To draw a clear picture of the fate of Cyprus during and after the Arab raids dated to the mid-seventh century, we can use Western, Byzantine, and especially Syriac primary sources.⁶⁶ In particular Syriac sources

63 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis* (n. 18 above), 425–34; Mansouri, *Chypre*, passim; and see, for instance, the detailed contribution on the historical narrative on the taking of Arwad-Arados (a small island off the Syrian coast) by Mu‘āwiyah’s army in 650–51 CE: L. Conrad, “The Conquest of Arwād: A Source-Critical Study of the Historiography of the Early Medieval East,” in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 1, *Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. Av. Cameron and L. I. Conrad (Princeton, 1992), 317–401.

64 See Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, 360–69; also A. Noth, “Isfahan-Nihawand: A Source Critical Study of Early Islamic Historiography,” in *The Expansion of the Early Islamic State*, ed. F. Donner (Aldershot, 2008), 245–60; idem, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 3 (London, 1994); al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* (n. 18 above); al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa’l mulūk*, trans. as *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, ed. E. Yar-Shater, 39 vols. (Albany, N.Y., 1985–2000).

65 E.g., see Conrad, “Conquest of Arwād.”

66 J. Wellhausen, “Arab Wars with the Byzantines in the Umayyad Period,” in *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times*, ed. M. Bonner (Aldershot, 2004), 31–64. For Western sources, see, e.g., Anastasius Bibliothecarius, *Historia Ecclesiastica sive Chronographia Reperita*, ed. B. G. Niebuhr, CSHB [41] (Bonn, 1841), 171. Contrary to the claims of Dikigoropoulos, Kyrris, and Roberts (Dikigoropoulos, “Cyprus betwixt Greeks and Saracens” [n. 1 above], 39–40; Kyrris, *History of Cyprus* [n. 1 above], 285–87; L. Roberts, *Latin Texts from the First Century B.C. to the Seventeenth Century A.D.*, vol. 8 of *Sources for the History of Cyprus*, ed. P. W. Wallace and A. G. Orphanides [Albany, N.Y., 2000], 55–56), Paul the Deacon never mentioned an attack on Cyprus in his *Historia Langobardorum*; the reference appeared instead in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, written by Anastasius Bibliothecarius in the second half of the 9th century. The mistake seem to have occurred because the two works were published together in vol. 95 of PL as *Historia Miscella* (the volume that all three cite). For Byzantine sources, see esp. Theophanes (*Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 344;

58 P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study in Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000); McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*; idem, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (London, 2009); J. Haldon, *Byzantium: A History* (Briscombe, 2000), 75–112. I am here particularly grateful to Peregrine Horden, who suggested this idea to me during a recent conference in Salerno.

59 C. Wickham, “The Mediterranean around 800: On the Brink of the Second Trade Cycle,” *DOP* 58 (2004): 161–74.

60 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 528.

61 Zavagno, “Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens,” 450.

62 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 477–84.

have been effectively edited, published, and analyzed by scholars such as James Howard-Johnston, Andrew Palmer, and Lawrence Conrad,⁶⁷ who stress that this historiographic tradition began in the mid-eighth century (the lost narrative of Theophilus of Edessa) but is better represented in texts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as the *Universal History of Michael the Syrian* (second half of the twelfth century) or the so-called *Chronicle of AD 1234*.⁶⁸ Although written five centuries after the event, these sources are nevertheless relatively reliable and must be regarded as useful comparative addenda to the Arab and Byzantine material. However, one should bear in mind, as Conrad states, that agreement among Syriac and Christian Arabic sources for historical events often reflects their reliance on a common source: “Byzantine historiography for the period . . . is extremely sparse and . . . the apparent wealth of material . . . seems likely to consist in large parts of extracts from a single source[.]”⁶⁹

According to the literary sources (written in Arabic, Syriac, and Greek),⁷⁰ Mu‘āwiyah, the Arab

governor of Syria, staged the first Arab naval raid against Cyprus in 649, after having tried at least twice (in 643 and 645) to persuade the caliph (‘Umar and then ‘Uthmān) to invade the Cypriot outpost, which was still under full Byzantine control. Indeed, in 647 the threat represented by the strategic role of Cyprus was too big to be overlooked.⁷¹ Mu‘āwiyah crossed from Acre to Cyprus with a large number of ships summoned from the Syrian and Egyptian fleets, attacking and sacking Salamis-Constantia.⁷² The Arab and Byzantine sources do not provide us with any detail concerning the plunder of other main urban centers: according to the *Life of St. Therapon*, Kition, on the southern coast, was spared, whereas one of the inscriptions of Soloi (on the northwesternmost corner of the island) proves that the city was hit only during the second invasion.⁷³ In fact, the Arab fleet was forced to retreat once rumors spread across the island that a Byzantine fleet, led by the admiral Kokokerizos, was about to arrive.⁷⁴

A second expedition dated to 653–54 apparently wreaked havoc in many Cypriot urban sites (Amathos, Lapithos-Lapta, Salamis-Constantia, Soloi, and Kition), some of which hastily erected walls to protect

trans. Mango and Scott, 478–80), but also the *Life of St. Therapon* (below); for a detailed analysis of *Chronographia*, see L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680–850): The Sources: An Annotated Survey*, Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs 7 (Aldershot, 2000), 168–70; and Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, 268–97. According to Haldon and Brubaker and to Howard-Johnston, the *Chronographia* (written ca. 810–14 and covering the period from the time of Diocletian to the reigns of Michael I and his son Theophylact) must be handled with care because of the variable quality of the older written sources from which it is assembled, only some of which can be firmly identified. One of these was *Ekloge chronographias*, a chronicle of events from the creation to Diocletian prepared in the last fifteen years of the 8th century from material collected and partly arranged by George the Synkellos before he died. Theophanes also relied on an important Syriac source currently identified with the lost chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa—a reliable and trustworthy account transmitted by later derivatives, as Howard-Johnston points out (*Witnesses to a World Crisis*, 233)—which he used in its Greek translation; it provided a narrative framework into which he inserted additional bits of information taken from the second continuation to the Chronicle of John of Antioch and the History to 720.

⁶⁷ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*; A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, Translated Texts for Historians 15 (Liverpool, 1993); Conrad, “Conquest of Arwād.”

⁶⁸ Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, 192–240. On the lost narrative of Theophilus of Edessa, see Conrad, “Conquest of Arwād,” 329–31.

⁶⁹ Conrad, “Conquest of Arwād,” 348.

⁷⁰ Wellhausen, “Arab Wars,” 35–45.

⁷¹ See Zavagno, “‘Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens,’” 462–67, with detailed bibliography; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh* 4:258; Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa’l Mamālik*, in *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, vol. 6 (1889; reprint, Leiden, 1867), 255; al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* 13.235–36; Theophanes, *Chronicle*, 344, 478. In truth, according to al-Kūfī (Ibn A’tham al-Kūfī), *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, ed. M. Khān (Hyderabad, 1968–75), 2:352, Mu‘āwiyah also emphasized the agricultural wealth and the mineral production of the island.

⁷² On the crossing, see al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* 13.235; Agapius of Manbij, *Kitāb al-Unwan*, ed. A. A. Vasiliev, PO 8.3 (Paris, 1912), 480; Dionysius of Tel-Mahré, *Chronicle*, in Palmer, *Seventh Century*, 93. On the ships, see Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 13; R. Pryor and E. Jeffreys, *The Age of the Dromon: The Byzantine Navy, ca. 500–1204* (Leiden, 2006), 24–25; Papacostas, “Byzantine Cyprus” (n. 33 above), 208–11; Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus* (n. 1 above), 395–418. On the attack, see Dionysius of Tel-Mahré, *Chronicle*, 97; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 344; trans. Mango and Scott, 478.

⁷³ *Life of St. Therapon*, AASS, May, 6:684–85; J. des Gagnier and T. T. Tran, *Soloi: Dix Campagnes de fouilles (1964–1974)*, vol. 1, *Introduction historique / La basilique* (Sainte Foy, 1985), 116–25; J. Noret, “L’Expédition canadienne à Soli et ses résultats pour l’intelligence et la datation de la Vie de S. Auxibe,” *AB* 104 (1986): 445–47.

⁷⁴ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 344; trans. Mango and Scott, 478.

their population.⁷⁵ The exaggerated assertions of damage caused by the attack contrast with the signs of continuity, such as the rebuilding of the Basilica at Soloi and of the Church of Limeniotissa at Paphos (both destroyed during the raids).⁷⁶ There is also evidence of continuous occupation of urban residential areas in Paphos, and signs of economic and building activities in Salamis-Constantia in the sigillographic, numismatic, and ceramic material recovered from the excavations.⁷⁷ I will return to this later.

It is, however, difficult to discern the real political status of the island before the “final” treaty was signed in 686–88 by the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik and Justinian II. We can rely only on sporadic references in the sources, like the report by Anastasios of Sinai (late seventh century) concerning some Cypriot prisoners: “a short time ago I was at the Dead Sea . . . and I found all the prisoners on state farms to be Cypriots”;⁷⁸ moreover, it seems that some urban centers, like Paphos, contained a substantial civil and military Muslim presence.⁷⁹ In general, I tend to agree with Vassilios Christides and Mohamed Mansouri, who focus less on the origins of the final treaty than on the diplomatic and military standoff between the Umayyads and the Byzantines during the second half of the seventh century as

portrayed and interpreted by the Byzantine and Islamic sources—and as expressed by Islamic legal practice.⁸⁰

On the one hand, the third quarter of the seventh century (from the naval battle of Dhāt aṣ-Ṣawārī in 655⁸¹ to the failed siege of Constantinople in 671–74) saw the Byzantines adopting a defensive stance; yet it is not by chance that Cyprus saw a peak in the circulation of bronze coins in the period 666–68, which was linked in all probability with the military preparations for the Umayyad push against Constantinople.⁸² On the other hand, the last quarter of the same century witnessed a strong revival of the Byzantine fortunes with a series of counterattacks by the maritime corps of the Mardaite targeting the coasts of Syria;⁸³ that these incursions may have used Cyprus as their launching pad is again possibly reflected in the numismatic evidence of the period (countermarked copper coins dated to the reign of Constantine IV, 668–685; see fig. 4), which indicates that the island was continuing to play a strategic role in the military operations that the Byzantines were conducting in the Levant against the Arabs.⁸⁴ The treaty involving Cyprus, signed in 686–88, therefore was part of a broader arrangement dictated by the new political conditions of the late seventh century:

In this year [685–86] Abimelech sent emissaries to Justinian to ratify the peace which was concluded on these terms: that the Emperor should remove the host of Mardaite from Lebanon and prevent their incursions; that Abimelech would give to the Romans every day 1000 gold pieces, a horse and a slave and that they would share in equal part the tax revenues of Cyprus, Armenia and Iberia. . . . The treaty

75 A. H. S. Megaw, “Le Fortificazioni bizantine a Cipro,” *Corso di Cultura sull’arte ravennate e bizantina* 32 (1985): 199–231; C. Balandier, “La défense des territoires à Chypre de l’époque archaïque aux invasions arabes (VIII^e s. av. n.è. –VII^e s. de. n.è.),” *Dialogues d’Histoire Ancienne* 28, no. 1 (June 2002): 178–95; Stewart, “Domes of Heaven” (n. 33 above), 73–75. On the Cypriot urban sites, see Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 21–28. On the dating of the expedition, see al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* 13.236; Dionysius of Tel-Mahrē, *Chronicle*, 98.

76 Des Gagnier and Tran, *Soloi*, 44–99; Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 25.

77 F. Maier and V. Karageorghis, *Paphos: History and Archaeology* (Nicosia, 1984), 292–301; Stewart, “Domes of Heaven,” 73–77; Zavagno, “Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens,” 467–68; also Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 418–23.

78 Anastasios of Sinai, *Questiones et Responsiones* 96, ed. M. Richard and J. Munitiz, S.J., *Anastasii Sinaitae Quaestiones et responsiones*, CCSG 59 (Turnhout, 2006), 114. On this source, see J. Haldon, “The Works of Anastasius of Sinai: A Key Source for the History of Seventh-Century East Mediterranean Society and Belief,” in Cameron and Conrad, *Problems in the Literary Source Material*, 107–47.

79 al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* 13.236; on this, see Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 30–38; Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 458; Maier and Karageorghis, *Paphos*, 300–307.

80 Mansouri, *Chypre*, 10–16; Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 29–38; S. Cosentino, “Constans II and the Byzantine Navy,” *BZ* 100 (2008): 577–602. For a focus on the final treaty, see Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, and idem, “Cyprus, Byzantium and the Arabs” (n. 18 above).

81 On the so-called Battle of Masts, see Cosentino, “Constans II,” 586–90, with detailed bibliography and analysis of the relevant sources.

82 Zavagno, “Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens,” 460.

83 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 363; trans. Mango and Scott, 506; Agapius, *Kitāb al-Unwan*, 497; Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 34 n. 97; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis* (n. 18 above), 226–27; Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 297, 416, 583; Pryor and Jeffreys, *Age of the Dromon*, 190–92.

84 Zavagno, “Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens,” 464–66.

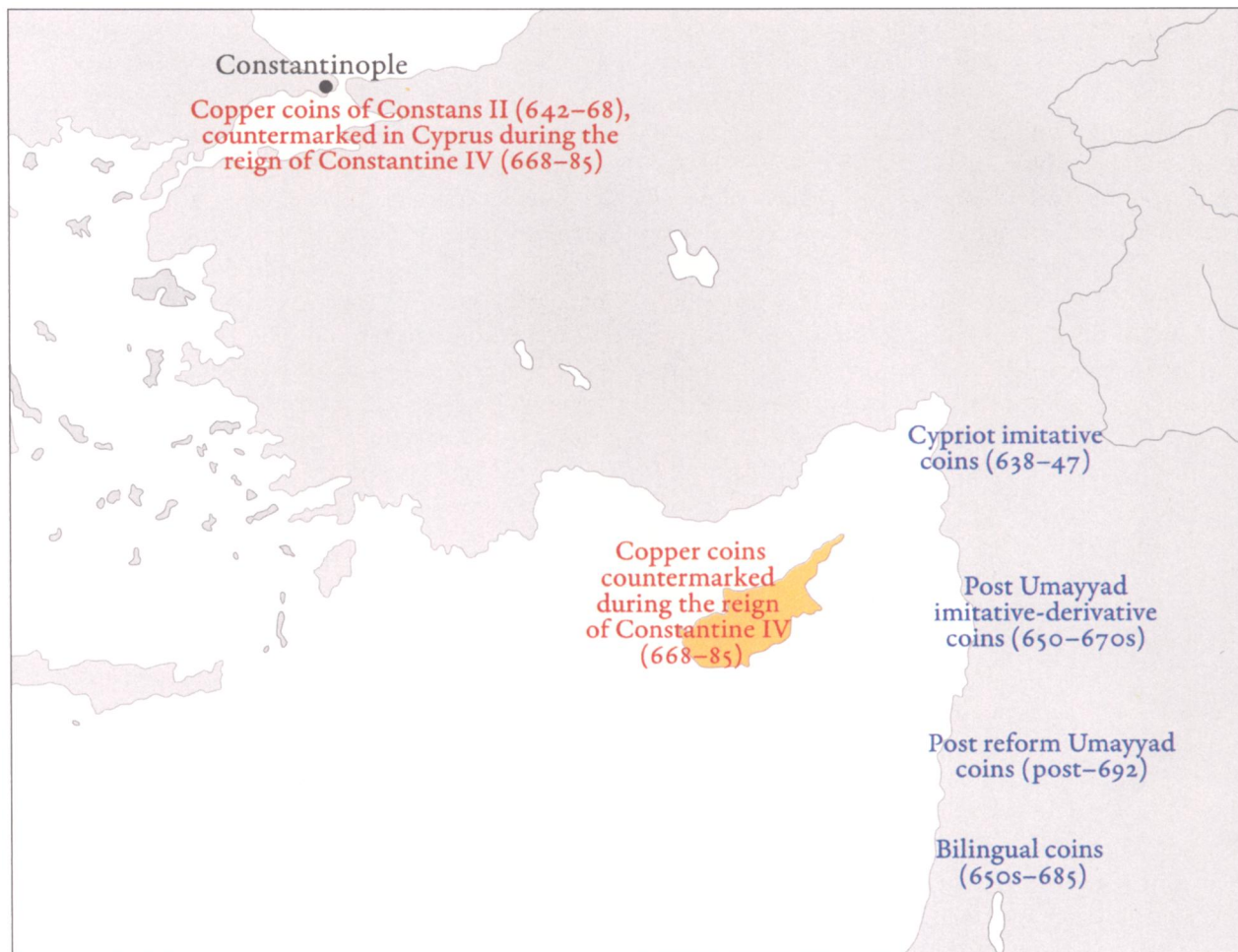


FIG. 4. Provenance of coinage circulating in Cyprus between 668 and 698, Byzantine coinage in red, Arab-Byzantine in blue (drawn by K. Sparkes).

was later ratified by the Magistrianos Paul sent to Abimelech.⁸⁵

85 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 363; trans. Mango and Scott, 506; with a slight variant the same terms are repeated by Constantine Porphyrogenetos in *DAI* (n. 49 above), chap. 22, ed. Jenkins and Moravcsik, 94; see R.-J. Lilie, *Die Byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber: Studien zur Strukturwandlung des byzantinische Staates im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert*, *Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia* 22 (Munich, 1976), 101–4; Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 44–45; Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 416–18; H. Ditten, *Ethnische Verschiebungen zwischen der Balkanhalbinsel und Kleinasien vom Ende des 6. bis zur zweiten Hälfte des 9. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1993), 142–44; Dionysius of Tel-Mahré, *Chronicle*, 128; and Michael the Syrian, *Chronicon* 2.470, ed. J. B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche, 1166–1199*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1899–1910), 2:470. The treaty is also referred to by the Arab sources (al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* 13.237, and al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* [n. 64

It is clear that the agreement included payment of tribute and withdrawal of the Mardaite, who were a thorn in the coastal side of the Umayyad territories,⁸⁶ although scholars often have preferred to focus on the fact that taxes were divided on the island between the two powers, and the alleged neutrality of the Cypriots appears only in later sources;⁸⁷ therefore it

above], 7:258), although these dated it to the aftermath of the first raids as signed by Mu'awiyah. On the treaty see Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 177–78, and Dikigoropoulos, "Political Status of Cyprus" (n. 22 above), with further bibliography. On the political conditions of the late 7th century, see Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 44–45.

86 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, 223–37.

87 Nicholas Mystikos, *ep.* 102, ed. R. H. J. Jenkins and L. G. Westerink, in *Nicholas I, Patriarch of Constantinople: Letters*, CFHB 6 = DOT 2 (Washington, D.C., 1973), 525–26.

is highly uncertain whether this partition or “condominium” meant anything much in practice. In truth, according to Mansouri and Christides, the very term *condominium* is misleading, for it is never used in the sources: in fact, there was no Islamic power or hybrid regime on the island; Constantine Porphyrogenetos noted that the Arabs did not possess Cyprus but simply received taxes from it.⁸⁸

The treaty was presented from different perspectives by the historical sources of the two parties. For the Muslims, it involved three actors—the empire, the caliphate, and the people of Cyprus regarded as tributary but independent:⁸⁹ the Cypriots contracted an *ʿAhd*, a form of nominal truce also found in the description of the status of the Balearics at the beginning of the eighth century.⁹⁰ This notion was never accepted by the Byzantines, particularly during the so-called second *fitna* (civil war) within the caliphate.⁹¹ Moreover, the treaty was soon breached by the emperor Justinian II, who attempted to move the population of the island of Cyprus to the newly built city of Nea Justinianoupolis on the Hellespont and refused to accept the minted coin that had been sent by Abimelech.⁹² A similar measure was apparently adopted by the caliph,⁹³ who however later agreed to repatriate those who had been expelled but increased the fiscal exaction. Justinian himself backtracked and repopulated Cyprus, effectively ending his dream of

building a new city as a monument to himself.⁹⁴ The island thus reverted to its former political status.

Indeed, the sigillographic evidence enables us to assert that seventh- and eighth-century Cyprus was a standard part of the Byzantine administrative, military, and bureaucratic machinery, as does the presence of local magnates invested with high court titles such as *illustrioi*, *spatharioi*, and *palatini*: “The administration of political authority and exercise of political power at a local level continued. Cyprus did not become a human desert.”⁹⁵ Especially from the beginning of the eighth century onward, seals of officials, dignitaries, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy make up the great majority of all seals in Cyprus: others seem to belong to well-to-do private citizens, for it is clear that sealing was not limited to members of the imperial administration.⁹⁶ Though it is difficult to precisely determine the typology of Byzantine governance structures in Cyprus (which became a theme only in the mid-tenth century), the island clearly retained importance as a provincial naval stronghold, as shown by two late seventh- or early eighth-century seals of *drouggarioi* (naval commanders) and one of the strategos of the *Kibyrrhaiotai*.⁹⁷ These seals (and those of the so-called Laurent type V belonging to *archontes* and *stratelatai* found at Amathos, Lambousa, and Kyrenia)—at least those dated to the late seventh century—could be related to the fluid situation noted by Conrad and Howard-Johnston: the Umayyads in the late seventh

88 As reported by Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 44; on the hybrid regime, see Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 177–78. Mansouri (personal communication) points out that one can loosely compare the political status of Cyprus with that of Carthage or (later) the Balearics and even Ethiopia, but he insists that although the Byzantines never disengaged from Cyprus, the local population and authorities enjoyed a degree of independence; Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 31–34.

89 Mansouri (personal communication). This idea reflects the definition proposed by the Arab jurists mentioned by Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb al-amwāl*, ed. M. Harrās (Beirut, 1988), 223–28; see Mansouri, *Chypre* (n. 3 above), 17–21; also Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 34.

90 Signes Codoñer, “Bizancio y las islas Baleares” (n. 42 above), 2–3.

91 Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 33; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, 192–233. Also Conrad, “Conquest of Arwād” (n. 63 above), 339.

92 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 365; trans. Mango and Scott, 509; *DAI*, chap. 47, ed. Moravcsik, 224; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicon* 2.470; al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* 13.238.

93 Al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* 13.238.

94 *DAI*, chap. 47, ed. Moravcsik, 224. On the obscure episode concerning the foundation of Nea Justinianoupolis, see primarily B. Englezakis, *Cyprus, Nea Justinianoupolis* (Nicosia, 1990); Stewart, “Domes of Heaven,” 78–81; Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 450–55; Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 165–66.

95 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 31. For the sigillographic evidence, see Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (n. 17 above); *DOSeals*, 2:101–6; W. Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung in Krisenzeiten: Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Administration im 6.–9. Jahrhundert* (Löwenklau, 2002), passim. For the magnates’ titles, see Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, 242; idem, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 81–92.

96 Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, 112–25.

97 Ibid., nos. 152, 154, 270–72 (the latter dated to the end of the 8th century, however); Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 81–92. On the origins, development, and importance of the Kibyrrhaiotai, see H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer: La marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VI^e–XV^e siècles* (Paris, 1966); Cosentino, “Constans II,” 602–3; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History* (n. 25 above), 729–37; and Pryor and Jeffreys, *Age of the Dromon*, 32–33, with further bibliography.

and early eighth centuries were still troubled by the Byzantine attacks on the Syrian coast, which had likely originated in Cyprus.⁹⁸

Other Cypriot seals belonging to members of the military apparatus reveal similar figures on other islands of the empire: in Malta, a contemporary seal of a drouggarios of the Kibyrhaïotai has been found; in Crete, although the picture is far from clear, the presence of local archontes is documented by a number of seals dated to the late seventh century; the existence of a local strategos in Sicily ca. 700, already known from texts, has been confirmed by the discovery in Cyprus of the eighth-century seal belonging to Konstantinos, imperial spatharios and strategos of Sicily.⁹⁹ That there was regular correspondence between Sicily and Cyprus is further stressed by another seal found in Cyprus belonging to a *kommerkiarios* of Sicily, which should be taken with the undated specimen of the *silentiarios* and *kommerkiarios* of Cyprus.¹⁰⁰ One cannot exclude the possibility that the latter islands played complementary though dissimilar roles in the imperial economic grand plan (no detailed study of the Cretan seals has yet been published): Sicily as main exporter of grain to Constantinople,¹⁰¹ and Cyprus at the intersection of the capital's local regional and interregional networks of exchange.

The presence of gold coins dated from Justinian II to Leo III in different urban sites (Salamis, Kourion, and Lapithos-Lapta) suggests a continued imperial presence (the so-called Constantinopolitan link previously hinted at) and Cyprus's role in the supply network of the capital.¹⁰² Although these issues in

gold fell from their volume in the sixth and seventh centuries, they undoubtedly point to the persistence of (lower) levels of liquidity among local social elites and the capability of the central state to demand, collect, and redistribute resources through taxation.¹⁰³ Of course, the fiscal system did not have as great an impact as in the late antique period, but it could still integrate the regional economies within the empire to some degree. In this regard, one should note the eighth-century Glazed White Ware—a typical Constantinopolitan production—yielded by the excavations at Paphos–Saranda Kolones (and matched in Salamis and Soloi, where potsherds belonging to this type of pottery were found in ninth-century layers), which would point both to a distributive pattern across the Aegean, direct from the capital, and to a link with Constantinople.¹⁰⁴ In fact, the sigillographic evidence has shown that lower- and high-ranking civil and fiscal officials, together with the military echelons of the Byzantine administrative apparatus, were residing and performing their functions in Cyprus in the eighth century and later. There are at least four seals of *διοικηται* and two belonging to Epiphánios *zygostates* (a special member of the central financial administration),¹⁰⁵ implying a fiscal administration that could exact the resources it needed (possibly through a mixed system of taxation in money and in kind).

The central administration dominated the production and distribution of agricultural goods (to be collected for the benefit of the fiscal redistributive process and, most likely, of the locally based soldiers), but the presence of the *kommerkiarioi* reveals activities of trade and exchange (through local ports and entrepôts) with lands outside the empire (or within it, as the seals of the Sicilian *kommerkiarios* found in Cyprus prove).¹⁰⁶ In other words, notwithstanding

98 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, passim; Conrad, "Conquest of Arwād," 339. For the seals of other military functionaries, see Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, nos. 150–53.

99 For Malta, see Brunella, *L'Arcipelago Maltese* (n. 42 above), 20. For Crete, see Zavagno, *Cities in Transition* (n. 8 above), 67–74, with further bibliography; also Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 762. For the Sicilian strategos, see *Le Liber Pontificalis: Texte, introduction et commentaire*, ed. L. Duchesne, 2 vols. (Paris, 1884–92), 1:383, and also Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 733 n. 29; Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, no. 269 (provenance unknown).

100 Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, no. 221; idem, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 119.

101 Prigent, "Le rôle des provinces" (n. 42 above), 298–99; idem, "La circulation monétaire en Sicile" (n. 42 above).

102 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 198–201; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 493.

103 Zavagno, "Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens" (n. 12 above), 461, 468. Bronze petty coinage had also been curtailed but old coins remained in circulation for longer.

104 K. Dark, *Byzantine Pottery* (Charleston, S.C., 2001), 63. On Paphos–Saranda Kolones, see J. Vroom, *After Antiquity: Ceramics and Society in the Aegean from the 7th to the 20th Centuries A.C.: A Case Study from Boeotia, Central Greece* (Leiden, 2003); Touma, "Chypre" (n. 51 above), 270.

105 Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, nos. 141–44, 299–300; Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung in Krisenzeiten*, 642.

106 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 479–81. On the highly debated role and function of the

the notable absence of bronze coins, exchange activities underpinned by the persistent vitality of state officials and local elites can be traced in Cyprus during the so-called Dark Ages. They are reflected in the ceramic evidence for commercial activities, discussed below. Although Cyprus could no longer benefit from its sixth- and early seventh-century role as a stepping-stone along the *annonae* routes linking Egypt with Constantinople, the continuous presence of civic and military functionaries of the Byzantine state apparatus ensured that the cycle of redistribution of resources and the levels of demand from its own personnel would continue.¹⁰⁷ But, in all probability, the state elites were not the only important figures who remained on the island. As Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon observe, when examining the social and economic milieu of any Byzantine province, one should always take into account the activities of members of the local autocephalic church and the local landowning magnates.¹⁰⁸

In Cyprus, the former are more visible both in the scant primary sources (mainly hagiography and acts of ecumenical councils) and in traditional historiography, which has always treated the ecclesiastical hierarchies as key in supporting a sense of Cypriot identity and the coherence of the local social and political fabric.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the importance of the church of Cyprus harks

back to the Third Ecumenical Council (Ephesos, 431 CE),¹¹⁰ when it claimed its independence from the patriarchate of Antioch, and more importantly to the famous invention of the tomb and gospel of St. Barnabas during the reign of the emperor Zeno (in 488). This episode, as A. H. S. Megaw and Charles Delvoye point out, reaffirmed the apostolic foundation of the church and thereby justified its claim to autocephaly.¹¹¹ The discovery of the body of the saint (who in the Acts of the Apostles is portrayed as the first witness of Christianity in the island) and the copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew found on his chest (later presented by the bishop Anthemios of Constantia to the emperor Zeno) were regarded as the definitive evidence of the autocephaly of the church of Cyprus; therefore its head should have the right to sign in red ink, to hold a scepter, and to dress in purple cloth.¹¹² These two moments were fixed in two (later) primary sources and given form in the building of two different churches, bolstering the role of Salamis-Constantia as the island's ecclesiastical capital and archiepiscopal see. Indeed, the surviving documentary evidence stresses the possibility that each church was a destination in a single pilgrimage. First, the apocryphal *Acts of Barnabas*, written after the Council of Ephesos, mentions the building of the Monastery of St. Barnabas, located outside the city walls (see figs. 5 and 6).¹¹³ Next the *Laudatio* for

kommerkiarioi, see mainly N. Oikonomides, "Silk Trade and Production in Byzantium from the Fifth to the Ninth Century: The Seals of the Kommerkiarioi," *DOP* 40 (1986): 33–53, and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1990), 232–38.

107 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 475–84. From the 4th to mid-7th century, the harbors and coves on Cyprus's southern coast were essential to the eastern tax route through which Egypt fed Constantinople; see Zavagno, "Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens," 450, with further bibliography.

108 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 485.

109 Dikigoropoulos, "Church of Cyprus" (n. 20 above); Englezakis, "Church of Cyprus" (n. 20 above); Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 310–27; A. Mitsides, "Η Εκκλησία της Κύπρου από τον δεύτερο μέχρι τον πέμπτο αιώνα," in T. Papadopoulos, *Ιστορία της Κύπρου*, vol. 3, *Βυζαντινή Κύπρος* (Nicosia, 2005), 107–27; Papacostas, "Byzantine Cyprus" (n. 33 above), 79–82; Stewart, "Domes of Heaven," 63–67; J. Hackett, *A History of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus from the Coming of the Apostles Paul and Barnabas to the Commencement of the British Occupation (A.D. 45–A.D. 1878) together with Some Account of the Latin and Other Churches Existing in the Island* (London, 1901).

110 Mansi, 4:1125; reporting the list of signatures of Cypriot bishops: Sophronios of Paphos, Zeno of Kourion, Rheginos of Constantia, and Evagrius of Soloi. Mansi, 4:1469: "the bishops have informed the Holy Synod both in writing and with their own voices that the bishop of the city of Antioch is performing ordinations in Cyprus. [It is now ordered] that these who preside over the holy churches of Cyprus should have the right, according to the canons of the holy fathers and ancient customs, to ordain their own pious bishops" (trans. Pohlsander, *Sources for the History of Cyprus* [n. 50 above], 21).

111 Megaw, "Campanopetra Reconsidered" (n. 1 above); C. Delvoye, "La place des grandes basiliques de Salamine de Chypre dans l'architecture paléochrétienne," in *Salamine de Chypre: Histoire et Archéologie: État des recherches: Lyon, 13–17 mars 1978*, ed. M. Yon (Paris, 1980), 313–28.

112 T. Mitford, "Roman Cyprus," in *Politische Geschichte (Provinzen und Randvölker: Griechischer Balkanraum; Kleinasien)*, ed. H. Temporini, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II.7.1 (Berlin, 1980), 1381. See also F. Halkin, "Les Actes Apocryphes de Saint Héraclide de Chypre disciple de l'Apôtre Barnabé," *AB* 82 (1964): 135; and Acts 13:14, 15:36–41.

113 BHG 225, 15–17, 22–26; trans. Pohlsander, *Sources for the History of Cyprus*, 24; Megaw, "Campanopetra Reconsidered," 396–99. The building of this church is also mentioned by the 5th-century



FIG. 5. Church of the Monastery of St. Barnabas, Salamis-Constantia; the present church and cloisters at the monastery date from 1756, and parts of the buildings reuse columns from the ancient site at Salamis (photo by author)



FIG. 6. City walls of Salamis-Constantia, mid-7th century (photo by author)

Barnabas, composed some 200 years after the invention of the relics, celebrates the emperor Zeno's patronage of a new church meant to lodge the newly found body of the saint (and so exalts the privilege of autocephaly granted to the Cypriot church).¹¹⁴ All evidence suggests that the new church must have been the so-called Campanopetra Basilica, located within the walls, where it could be supplied by the city aqueduct.¹¹⁵ It is worth noting that at the beginning of the seventh century, that very aqueduct was refurbished under the patronage of two archbishops and endowed with a new set of arches.¹¹⁶

In the following centuries, while the autocephaly of the local church grew stronger,¹¹⁷ the island and its churches took on and maintained a key role along the eastern Mediterranean pilgrimage routes, as shown both by the archaeological evidence, which indicates that the main Cypriot shrines were rebuilt after the supposed devastation brought about by the Arab raids, and by the travelogues of pilgrims. They include Antoninus Placentinus in the sixth century;¹¹⁸ the Anglo-Saxon Willibald, who traveled at the beginning of the eighth century from England to the Holy Land

via Paphos and Constantia;¹¹⁹ Epiphanius the Monk, who journeyed from Cyprus to Tyre in the early eighth or early ninth century;¹²⁰ and eventually Peter of Atroa, who in the early ninth century spent ten months visiting some unknown sanctuaries on the island.¹²¹

In Salamis-Constantia, the basilica of Campanopetra was rebuilt together with the other impressive basilica, dedicated to the legendary fifth-century Bishop Epiphanius.¹²² In Trimithos, the *Life of St. Spyridon* (655) written by Bishop Theodore of Paphos was read for the first time in the local church on 14 December 655, during the feast dedicated to the saint; among those present at the feast were Sergios, archbishop of Constantia; Paul, archbishop of Crete (en route from his island to Constantinople); Theodore, bishop of Trimithos; Theodore, bishop of Kition; and Eusebios, bishop of Lapithos.¹²³ It is worth noting that after the *Life* had been read, the local congregation suddenly recognized, apparently for the first time, that a painting over the main door of the church represented

Life of St. Epiphanius 8.40, ed. W. Dindorf, *Epiphanii episcopi Constantiae opera*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1859), 46.

114 Alexander, *Laudatio Barnabae Apostoli* 2.4.40–41, ed. P. Van Deun, in *Hagiographica Cypria: Sancti Barnabae Laudatio auctore Alexandro Monacho et Sanctorum Bartholomaei et Barnabae vita e menologio imperiali deprompta*, CCSG 26 (Leuven, 1993), 111–21; the *Laudatio* was written in the beginning of the 6th century by Alexander, a monk of the monastery of St. Barnabas near Salamis. The *Laudatio* makes clear that Peter the Fuller (patriarch of Antioch between 461 and 488, though not continuously) had to concede on the question of the autocephaly of the Cypriot church.

115 Delvoye, "La place des grandes basiliques"; A. Papageorgiou, "L'Architecture de la période byzantine à Chypre," *Corsi di Cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina* 32 (1985): 325–35; G. Roux, *La basilique de la Campanopetra* (Paris, 1998); Megaw, "Campanopetra Reconsidered," 400–401.

116 J.-P. Sodini, "Epigraphica: Notes sur quelques inscriptions de Chypre," *TM* 5 (1973): 327–84.

117 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 309–10, with further bibliography.

118 *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini: Un viaggio in Terra Santa del 560–70 d.C.*, ed. C. Milani (Milan, 1977), 1.2.88, p. 35. This travelogue (itinerarium) is traditionally ascribed to Antoninus Placentinus because its first sentence invokes a local martyr named Antoninus, and the journey has been variously dated to ca. 570 or ca. 550; see D. Caner, S. Brock, and R. Price, *History and Hagiography from Late Antique Sinai*, Translated Texts for Historians 53 (Liverpool, 2010), 252–74, with further bibliography.

119 On Willibald, see McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (n. 43 above), 129–34; and J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Westminster, 2002), 222. For the text, Hugeburc, *Vita Willibaldi* 1–2, see C. H. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany: Being the Lives of SS. Willibrord, Boniface, Sturm, Leoba and Lebuin together with the Hodoeporicon of St. Willibald and a Selection from the Correspondence of St. Boniface* (London, 1954), 161.

120 Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 207 (early 8th century); Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 322 (early 9th century).

121 *Vita Petri Atroae* 101, ed. V. Laurent, *Vita of the Blessed Petros of Atroa*, SubsHag 29 (Brussels, 1956), 169. On this saint, see Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 395; and Papacostas, "Byzantine Cyprus," 101.

122 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 418; A. Papageorgiou, "Foreign Influences on the Early Christian Architecture of Cyprus," in Karageorghis, *Acts of the International Archaeological Symposium "Cyprus between the Orient and the Occident"* (n. 3 above), 490–504. Archaeological and historical evidence attests to the survival of the multiple-domed cathedral until the 13th century. The Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council explicitly mention the church as lodging icons, and comparative (although not solid) evidence points to two different restorations of the cathedral: one at the beginning of the 8th century and another in the late 8th to 9th century (construction of additional pilasters). See Stewart, "Domes of Heaven," 80–88; and Megaw, "Byzantine Architecture" (n. 20 above), 78.

123 P. Van den Ven, *La Légende de S. Spyridon évêque de Tremithonte* (Louvain, 1953), 88–111. See also Chrysos, "Cyprus" (n. 13 above), 7.

St. Spyridon performing a miracle in Alexandria.¹²⁴ In Soloi the local three-aisled basilica, which had been spared during the first Arab raid, was sacked in 653 during the second, but it was soon repaired along with the adjoining building, as two inscriptions found in the church's atrium indicate.¹²⁵

The history of the Cypriot church in the seventh and eighth centuries (and therefore the role played in the local political, economic, and social systems by the ecclesiastical hierarchies) has always been interpreted through two important lenses: the so-called transplantation of the local population (in part or whole) to Nea Justinianoupolis and the island's (supposed) role as bulwark against iconoclasm.¹²⁶ As mentioned above, the first episode remains rather obscure. Though it has generally been regarded as one of the catastrophes hitting Cyprus during this period, one may conclude with Kyrris that there is no evidence that the entire population was moved or that those Cypriots who remained in 692 had been left without clergy.¹²⁷ It is also interesting that once the migrants returned to the island in the early eighth century, the lead seals of the archbishop of Cyprus revealed a striking new design, which introduced for the very first time the title *Kyprou*; that these have been found at different localities in Cyprus, including Salamis-Constantia and Amathos, puts into question the theory that coastal urban settlements collapsed.¹²⁸ Indeed, lead seals of mid-eighth-century Cypriot archbishops have been found on the island (though their exact provenance remains obscure), implying that the local ecclesiastical hierarchies persisted and remained relevant in and beyond the political borders of the empire. One archiepiscopal lead seal recovered at Constantia, Kourion, and Byblos

was struck on a reengraved die; another is intriguingly similar in design and style to contemporary specimens issued by the metropolitan of Crete.¹²⁹

The latter finds suggest the (feeble) persistence of a relationship between the two islands, as seen in the presence of the Cretan archbishop in Trimithos in 655. Taken with the Sicilian seals of the *kommerkiarioi* and *strategos* of Sicily, might they hint at a (political and ecclesiastical) link attesting to a multidimensional orientation of Cyprus—both connected to the nearby regions of south Asia Minor (Pamphylia and Cilicia)¹³⁰ and Syria-Palestine and acting as the final station along the shipping and communication routes unifying the Byzantine islands of central and eastern Mediterranean? Might they imply new stops on the so-called second great new sea link (the first being the main trunk route between western and eastern Mediterranean, ending in Constantinople), which in the second half of the eighth century connected Sicily with the Holy Land and Alexandria?¹³¹ Unfortunately, the analysis of ceramics—the main indicator of interregional exchange and commerce—is only now becoming mature in Sicily while remaining in its infancy in Crete and Cyprus. We thus lack the opportunity to assess the presence of locally made pottery on the islands in the way that is possible to a degree for Cypriot pottery in eighth-century sites in Syria and Palestine. I will briefly return to this problem below.

I want to conclude this short excursion into the ecclesiastical history of Cyprus, recognizing the impact of the clergy on the eighth-century Cypriot elites and society at large (and therefore their influence on the redistribution of resources and levels of demand), by stressing the need for a different perspective on the impact of iconoclasm on Cyprus. The following judgment is typical: "Iconoclasm had few if any roots in Cyprus[.] . . . from the provincial standpoint it was a policy promulgated from the top-down by emperors

124 Van den Ven, *La Légende de S. Spyridon*, 110–11.

125 Papageorgiou, "Cities and Countryside" (n. 34 above), 43; Megaw, "Betwixt Greeks and Saracens" (n. 3 above), 512; des Gagnier and Tran, *Soloi* (n. 73 above), 1:116–25.

126 For a brief overview of these topics, see Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 441–46, 450–55; on Nea Justinianoupolis the best contribution by far is Englezakis, *Cyprus, Nea Justinianoupolis* (n. 94 above), with an excellent summary of the *status quaestionis*.

127 Kyrris, "Cyprus, Byzantium and the Arabs" (n. 18 above), 657. For the view that the episode was a catastrophe, see C. Diederichs, *Céramiques hellénistiques, romaines et byzantines*, Salamine de Chypre 9 (Paris, 1980), 5; Englezakis, *Cyprus, Nea Justinianoupolis*, passim; and Kyrris, *History of Cyprus* (n. 1 above), 288–89.

128 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 455.

129 Damianos, archbishop of Cyprus (A. Dunn, "Small Finds," in Megaw, *Kourion* [n. 1 above], 539–40); see Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (n. 17 above), no. 455, and pp. 83–100. To these specimens one should also add the lead seals belonging to the bishop of the little island of Aradus (off the Syrian coast) and the metropolitan of Tyre, of which three have been found in Cyprus (all having the second half of the 7th century as terminus post quem); see idem, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 92, 118.

130 Papacostas, "Byzantine Cyprus," 184.

131 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 566–87.

(and not responding to the popular sensibilities of the Cypriots) and hurtful to the religious sensibilities of the village people.”¹³² Moreover, the so-called permanent iconolatry of the Cypriots “[as] amply attested by the sources . . . can be explained with the traditional Cypriot conservatism and to the lack of effective control of Cyprus by Constantinople owing to the neutral condominium, which could enable the Cypriots to follow a different policy than the official one of the Byzantine Empire.”¹³³ Clearly, modern historians link the supposed iconophile sympathies of the people of the island to its ruralization (as the urban society of the capital is viewed as more progressive) and to its independence vis-à-vis the central government. The supposed self-government of the Cypriots led in turn to the stubborn resistance of the iconodule local clergy (headed by the archbishopric as the only authority over the inhabitants)¹³⁴ and the final triumph of the orthodoxy of the Cypriots, ratified by the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787 CE). Here, indeed, a sermon read out in front of the entire assembly by Archbishop Constantine during one of the sessions of the council referred to some miracles performed by icons in Cyprus.¹³⁵ To this report one should also add the episode recorded by Theophanes concerning Michael Lachanodrakon, strategos of the Thrakesion theme, who purportedly banished a group of nuns and monks to Cyprus after having them blinded because they did not want to obey the emperor.¹³⁶ Finally, a passage from the early ninth-century *Life of Saint Stephen the Younger* would add to the iconophile aura of Cyprus: “there are three areas, which are on our [iconodule] side and do not participate in this foul heresy; I advise you to go there . . . and to the island of Cyprus [where] some monks have [also] headed.”¹³⁷

132 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 466.

133 Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, 201.

134 Again, this view is a clear reflection of the dominant role played by the archbishopric in the current political debate on the divided island.

135 Mansi, 13:77. A lead seal possibly belonging to Constantine is recorded by Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, no. 458.

136 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 445; trans. Mango and Scott, 614 (n. 13 above).

137 *La vie d'Étienne le Diacre*, ed. and trans. M.-F. Auzépy (Aldershot, 1997), 1172; PG 100:1117–20. On this *Life*, see Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: Sources* (n. 66 above), 220–23.

But recently the latter source has been recognized as vehemently anti-iconoclastic, whereas the evidence for flight from iconoclast persecution is meager and reliant on later sources; more importantly, the account describing safe areas for the iconophiles has been shown to be largely an invention of the author, intended to reinforce and legitimate the position of those monks who had come from those regions after 787.¹³⁸ By the same token, the supposed persecution of the monks and nuns was much less extensive than described by Theophanes in a passage shaped largely by a martyrological topos and a pro-iconophile author's desire to disqualify the iconoclast.¹³⁹ As for the three episodes reported in the Nicaean sermon, Metcalf rightly states that they reflect the intent of the 787 Council.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, Brubaker and Haldon aver that these incidents established “a formal cult of images for the first time[,] . . . a major development in the way images were regarded henceforth in the eastern Roman world.”¹⁴¹

Rather than insisting that Cyprus was an iconophile bulwark—a role for which no proof exists—it seems to me possible to see material evidence of ecclesiastical patronage and largesse, which in turn supported skilled artisanal practice, artistic production, and workmanship. One such piece of evidence is the fifth-century basilica of Panagia Kanakaria at Lythrangomi,¹⁴² rebuilt in the early eighth century and possibly restored in the mid-ninth century, according to a frescoed inscription commemorating the archbishop of Cyprus and the patriarch of Jerusalem.¹⁴³ Others include remains of eighth-century frescoes in the church of St. Herakleidos at Thamassos, a pilgrimage center from the fourth century onward;¹⁴⁴ as Metcalf

138 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 234–47.

139 Ibid.

140 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 441–46.

141 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 275; on the 787 Council more generally, 260–76. See D. Michaelides, “Opus Sectile in Cyprus,” in Bryer and Gheorghallides, *Sweet Land of Cyprus* (n. 13 above), 77–78.

142 A. H. S. Megaw and E. J. Hawkins, *The Church of Panagia Kanakaria* (Washington, D.C., 1977), 33–35, 147–49; Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 225; Papacostas, “Byzantine Cyprus,” plan at 6a, description at 70.

143 Megaw and Hawkins, *Church of Panagia Kanakaria*, 147–49.

144 Papacostas, “Byzantine Cyprus,” 145; Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 421.

and Demetrios Michaelides have observed, the *opus sectile* technique survived in the same church and also in the Panagia Limeniotissa at Paphos and in the church of Episkopi, “where in the so-called chapel at Saraya, there is an opus sectile floor made of *crustae* and *champleve* taken from the Episcopal Basilica at Kourion.”¹⁴⁵ To these should be added the rebuilding in the mid-seventh century of the church of St. Epiphanius (in which Willibald prayed during the feast of St. John the Baptist in the 720s)¹⁴⁶ and the possible restoration of the basilica of Campanopetra in the late seventh or beginning of the eighth century, both continuing to serve as pilgrimage centers on the island, as well as the vaulted basilicas of the Karpas peninsula (Aphendrika, Asomatoi, Hagia Varvara, and Sykae, generically attributed to the so-called *condominium* years).¹⁴⁷

Although the evidence is rather limited in type and variety, one can infer that the regular clergy and the upper echelons of church administration played an important role in the economic system of the island in the seventh and eighth centuries. While we possess no information on the church’s possible function as landowner, the large number of churches restored or refurbished in the period indicate that it was investing and directly intervening in local economic affairs both in rural areas (the Karpas peninsula) and in urban centers (such as Salamis-Constantia, Soloi, and Paphos).¹⁴⁸ And lead seals point to the uninterrupted involvement of the archbishopric and bishops in the local political system from the late seventh century on.

The economic power of the church—less than it enjoyed when the huge fifth- and sixth-century basilicas were constructed,¹⁴⁹ but nevertheless persisting—

could also have benefited from and contributed to the long-distance and regional exchange networks based on luxury or semi-luxury goods (although solid evidence for the existence of this type of good is lacking). Such networks could complement and reinforce the role and function of state elites. Moreover, the episcopacies and the regular clergy probably helped promote artisanal production and a skilled labor force. In other words, the church and perhaps the few monastic institutions existing on the island¹⁵⁰ affected the local level of demand as well as being interconnected with and complementing the social, political, and bureaucratic functions of the central administrators and local magnates (to which I will return shortly). Their actions somewhat echoed the administrative and legal tasks that the local ecclesiastical hierarchy and the bishoprics handled not only within the provinces of the empire¹⁵¹ but also in Umayyad-ruled Syria and Palestine, where they were responsible for maintaining the economic health of the local communities by minting and sanctioning the so-called pseudo-Byzantine or proxy coinage—an attempt to replicate widely known Byzantine originals to ensure widespread acceptance in the marketplace and to deliberately circulate a cultural, visual, and ideological message of loyalty.¹⁵²

Paired with the economic capacity of the church, the state not only helped maintain fiscal management and administrative structures but brought about social changes as well by enhancing central control over the collection and redistribution of resources. As Brubaker and Haldon remark,

It was the people . . . who constituted this system, these structures, and who brought with them to their occupations a range of socially and culturally determined values and ways of working which impacted directly on how the arrangements as a whole actually worked. The role of the provincial [officials] evolved not simply as a factor of the needs of imperial

145 Michaelides, “Opus Sectile,” 77–78. See also Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 264–65.

146 Hugeburc, *Vita Willibaldi* 1–2, see Talbot, *Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, 161 (n. 119 above).

147 On the basilica of Campanopetra, see Papacostas, “Byzantine Cyprus,” 90; Stewart, “Domes of Heaven” (n. 33 above), 66–67; Megaw, “Campanopetra Reconsidered” (n. 1 above). On the basilicas of the Karpas peninsula, see Kyrris, “Cyprus, Byzantium and the Arabs,” 648; Papacostas, “Byzantine Cyprus,” 82, 211–16; Megaw, “Byzantine Architecture,” 76–77; Megaw, “Three Vaulted Basilicas in Cyprus” (n. 33 above).

148 Such investment runs counter to the traditional notion that the Cypriot economy was fully demonetized.

149 Megaw, “Byzantine Architecture,” 57–75.

150 Papacostas, “Byzantine Cyprus,” 92–99.

151 Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (n. 45 above), 232–42; Haldon, *Byzantium: A History* (n. 58 above), 131–52.

152 Walmsley, “Coinage and the Economy of Syria-Palestine” (n. 6 above), 26–28; Zavagno, “Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens” (n. 12 above), 468–75, with further bibliography. On the economic relevance of the Arab-Byzantine coinage to regional and interregional trade and commercial exchange, see below.

military administration but also as a product of the ambitions and social and economic interests of the individuals themselves, . . . and the same applies to all other officials of the state as well as to the clergy.¹⁵³

It goes without saying that often the administrative, bureaucratic, and fiscal machinery in the provinces relied (if perhaps only in its upper echelons) on local wealthy families and their clients. Most of the middle-ranking officers and state officials came from a local privileged background—from families having sufficient literacy, a network of patronage, and ample wealth to attain imperial dignities and to serve as essential symbols of social status. The above-mentioned lead seals bearing the rank of *illoustrios* are highly revealing in this regard: the eighty-two specimens, possibly from an archive in Salamis-Constantia, are all dated to the very last decade of the seventh century (according to their style and iconography) and point to the continued presence of a network of local magnates writing to the capital from different Cypriot cities.¹⁵⁴ The same applies to a chest of lead seals from Khlorakas (north of Paphos) carrying the dignity of *palatinus* (dated to the late seventh or early eighth century) and *patricius* (dated to the mid-eighth century and pointing to a very high rank reached after a career in the military and civic service).¹⁵⁵ Four specimens belonging to honorary eparchs, all dated after 700, indicate that notables from local leading families had a role in the governance structures of the island, as the *eparchoi* probably functioned as liaisons between the military and fiscal authority of the Byzantine provinces.¹⁵⁶

The sigillographic evidence suggests that local aristocrats, at least between the last decade of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century, took part in local administration;¹⁵⁷ they thus retained at least part of their urban orientation, with Salamis-Constantia

at the heart of the Cypriot political, fiscal, and social network. Although to date little support has been available from archaeological excavations, all evidence indicates that the Cypriot capital survived the Arab raids and remained economically and socially active. One cannot help wondering if future fieldwork, moving away from the four foci of pre-1974 research—the so-called Huilerie complex, the basilica of Campanopetra, the walls, and the gymnasium¹⁵⁸—could enhance the current picture. In fact, as I recently pointed out in a reassessment of the reports of previous archaeological excavations,¹⁵⁹ in the late seventh to the early eighth century the bath-gymnasium complex in Salamis-Constantia was repaired. Moreover, a massive defensive wall was erected to protect some parts of the city, including the areas of the two major pilgrimage centers; the aqueduct was further refurbished; and two cisterns abutting the former forum were built. During the period from the late seventh to the beginning of the eighth century the Huilerie complex was partitioned and encroached on by three separate two-story buildings: the first with an external portico, the second focused on a central court, and the third expanding beyond the limit of the complex.¹⁶⁰ This occupied only the external fronts of the original *insula*. Here at least one workshop has been discovered, with an olive press that has given the whole complex its name, some ovens for the production of bread, and lime.

These faint traces of the development of Salamis-Constantia's urban fabric along economically vital lines¹⁶¹ match the evidence yielded at Paphos. There, a number of small houses and simple workshops (frequented during the period 680–780 CE) were uncovered in the area of the former Roman agora and around the Chrysopolitissa cathedral (refurbished

153 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History* (n. 25 above), 666.

154 Metcalf, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (n. 17 above), 242.

155 Ibid., 267–69. The seals are surprisingly plentiful in Cyprus, perhaps reflecting some temporary phases in the administration of the island in the late 7th to early 8th centuries.

156 Ibid., 77–78, 236–41. On the function of *eparchoi*, see Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 679.

157 Christides, *Image of Cyprus* (n. 3 above), 39.

158 For a summary of the discoveries made before 1974, see mainly Yon, *Salamine de Chypre* (n. 111 above).

159 Zavagno, “Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens,” 467–68.

160 The so-called Huilerie complex is a large household dated to the 5th century, located a few meters to the west of the Basilica of Campanopetra and organized around a central court. Its 5th–6th century facies is characterized by rich stucco decoration. An inscription mentioning Epiphanius has been found, possibly pointing to an ecclesiastical function (episcopal palace?): see G. Argoud, O. Callot, and B. Helly, *Une résidence byzantine “l’huilerie”* (Paris, 1980).

161 Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 23; Zavagno, *Cities in Transition* (n. 8 above), 153–71.

in the eighth century with a new apse on the axis of the original basilica), which remained the cathedral of the bishops of Paphos until the ninth century.¹⁶² Indeed, around the Limeniotissa basilica (located in the area of the harbor and restored in the second half of the seventh century) a number of unpretentious buildings were erected with spolia;¹⁶³ the floor of a rather showy although simple rectangular hall, paved with polychrome marbles from the nave of the church, bears Arabic inscriptions indicating that Paphos was the anonymous garrison town in Cyprus where a large number of soldiers were stationed.¹⁶⁴ These inscriptions, as Christides has pointed out,¹⁶⁵ all had funeral purposes and reflect three different stages of the Arab presence, extending from the late seventh to the late eighth century. There is also literary evidence that an Arab population was present in Cyprus even after the retreat of the local garrison under the caliph Yazid. In fact, according to al-Balādhurī (writing 200 years later), a number of Syrian colonists from Ba'albek were settled in the city by Mu'āwiyah; moreover, these were among those Cypriots transferred to Nea Justinianoupolis in 692.¹⁶⁶

Although further excavations are desperately needed, we can surmise that in both Salamis-Constantia and Paphos (which happen to be the two cities visited by Willibald in 723),¹⁶⁷ continued artisanal activities and the production of locally made ceramics and amphorae could be documented. These manufacturing activities may also point to

demonumentalization as a change in the use of public areas, as regional elites both maintained effective economic infrastructures at the city level and supported local rural production, implying prosperity in city as well as country. Thus a picture emerges of urban elites who might have functioned to some degree as part of the Byzantine state apparatus, but whose distance from Constantinople made it necessary for them to do more.¹⁶⁸ It easily accommodates the idea that imperial authority existed locally, particularly when reinforced by the presence of the field army—or the fleet, in the case of Cyprus. But such authority was exerted daily on the local population by the local notables, who were equipped with high dignities, civic and military administrative functions, and patronage networks. The notables managed the fiscal apparatus and retained an essential role in orienting the economy of a rather diminished urban population.

These urban trajectories have already been demonstrated for Gortyn in Crete and for Jerash and Pella in Syria and Palestine, though the latter yielded far more evidence of enhanced structures of rural exploitation and strategies of land use,¹⁶⁹ which enable us to fully appreciate the aristocrats' changing social, political, and economic role. But in Cyprus, we lack information on several kinds of artifacts (especially locally made ceramics) produced between the late seventh and the beginning of the tenth centuries;¹⁷⁰ and because of this gap in our knowledge of local material culture, few scholars have questioned the fate of the local magnates. But as Armstrong has recently pointed out, the assumption that formerly urban populations simply relied on subsistence strategies as they relocated inland from the coast is no longer sufficient.¹⁷¹ Instead, it is possible to propose for the Cypriot landowning elites a political rearrangement similar to that advanced by Hugh Kennedy for Syria and Palestine.¹⁷²

162 A. H. S. Megaw, "Reflections on Byzantine Paphos," in *KAΘΗΓΕΤΡΙΑ: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey for Her 80th Birthday*, ed. J. Chrysostomides (London, 1988), 139–47.

163 Maier and Karageorghis, *Paphos* (n. 77 above), 300–306.

164 al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* (n. 18 above), 13.236; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kitāb al-Kāmil fi'l Ta'rikh* (Beirut, 1967), 3:137, a much later source dated to the 13th century: see Mansouri, *Chypre* (n. 3 above), 42–45. On this episode, see Kyrris, "Nature of the Arab-Byzantine Relations" (n. 13 above), 155; also idem, "Cyprus, Byzantium and the Arabs" (n. 18 above), 628.

165 Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 51–63; see also Papacostas, "Byzantine Cyprus," 212; Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 262–64; A. H. S. Megaw, "A Muslim Tombstone from Paphos," *JRAS* 82.3–4 (1950): 108–9.

166 al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* 13.236–37, on which see Zavagno, "Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens," 477; Kyrris, "Cyprus, Byzantium and the Arabs," 7.

167 Hugeburc, *Vita Willibaldi* 1–2, see Talbot, *Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany* (n. 119 above), 161.

168 Zavagno, *Cities in Transition*, 132–51.

169 Ibid.; Walmsley, "Economic Developments" (n. 7 above), 333–37; idem, *Early Islamic Syria* (n. 7 above), 71–103; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 719.

170 McClellan and Rautman, "Where Have All the Farmers Gone?" (n. 4 above), 85.

171 Armstrong, "Trade" (n. 30 above), 168–77.

172 H. Kennedy, "Syrian Elites from Byzantium to Islam: Survival or Extinction?," in Haldon, *Money, Power and Politics in Early Islamic Syria* (n. 6 above), 181–200.

This hypothesis could also incorporate the information provided to us by two primary sources. First, a Syriac source, Dionysios of Tel-Mahre, describes the second Arab assault on Salamis-Constantia as follows: “When the Romans and the natives actually sighted the Arab ships on the horizons and saw their numbers their courage deserted them and they took flight. Some, being rich, possessed sailing vessels in which they escaped to Roman territory.”¹⁷³ Second, in *De administrando imperio* Constantine Porphyrogenetos reports that during the reign of Justinian II, “a Byzantine embassy was sent to Damascus to negotiate the repatriation of some Cypriot prisoners; it comprised three members of the local aristocracy called Phangoumeis and one representative of the emperor.”¹⁷⁴ The Phangoumeis may lie at the origins of the provincial clans and families that built on the positions, offices, and high status enjoyed in their own provinces to become important in the middle Byzantine service elite.¹⁷⁵ They may also illustrate the sort of adaptation in the structures of governance common to territories such as Sicily, Malta, Crete, and the Balearics that were integrated into the empire’s culture and religion though located on its periphery.¹⁷⁶ These areas sometimes adjusted their loyalties to survive the various difficulties facing them, such as the Arab incursions or local revolts against the central power.¹⁷⁷

It seems to me that Cyprus may to some extent have mitigated the effects of the three-pronged changes in the Byzantine world during the passage from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages: the loss of the role of the cities in the fiscal system, the rise of the village as the basis of fiscal administration (discussed further below), and the crushing effect of the court

on local elites’ levels of consumption and pattern of demand.¹⁷⁸ For in Cyprus, evidence of ruralization of urban environment (as seen above) can be reinterpreted as demonstrating the economic vitality of urban structures (now reorganized around artisanal and commercial functions): it sheds light on the role of the central administrative and fiscal system, as shown by the analysis of lead seals; the persistence of urban-oriented elites, as glimpsed in archaeological evidence; the social and political weight of the local archbishopric and of ecclesiastical hierarchies; and the importance of the island to pilgrimage routes. All this suggests that rather than being a no-man’s-land, Cyprus interacted positively with the neighboring Islamic regions while preserving strict, although limited, relations with the Constantinopolitan court and other not-so-peripheral Byzantine islands such as Crete and Sicily. What follows is an examination of the persistence of levels of trade, as previously overlooked ceramics are reassessed to demonstrate that such trade complements the role of the state and the Cypriot social elites in maintaining urban activities, productive capacity, and market exchange relationships on a regional and interregional basis.

A Nonstate Economy: “Vessels” for Trade

Fertile and strategically located along the shipping routes of the eastern Mediterranean, the island of Cyprus has been praised for its wealth since Roman times. In the first century CE, for instance, the geographer Strabo wrote that “in excellence Cyprus falls behind no one of the islands[,] because it is rich in wine and oil and uses home-grown wheat. There are mines of copper . . . in which are produced sulphate of copper and copper-rust useful in the healing art. . . . [T]he trees [were] cut down for melting of copper and silver; and of further help was shipbuilding.”¹⁷⁹ Lying in the middle of the gulf between Cilicia and Syria and just one day away from Egypt as the crow flies, the island—whose circuit can be completed in twelve days, according to the tenth-century Arab geographers al-Muqaddasī and Ibn Khurdābeh—was described by Hierokles’

173 Dionysius of Tel-Mahré, *Chronicle* (n. 72 above), 96 (trans. Palmer).

174 *DAI* (n. 49 above), chap. 47, ed. Jenkins and Moravcsik, 224–25.

175 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 606. Although Constantine’s reliability has often been questioned (see Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: Sources* [n. 66 above], 295–300), the embassy seems plausible; in the late 9th or early 10th century, the bishop of Kythrea, Demetrianos, headed a legation to Baghdad to free some Cypriots taken prisoner by Arab raiders; see H. Grégoire, “Vita of St. Demetrianos,” *BZ* 16 (1907): 232–33.

176 Signes Codoñer, “Bizancio y las islas Baleares” (n. 42 above), 7–11.

177 For example, the revolt against Constantinople staged by the strategos Euphemios in 826 CE.

178 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 459–64.

179 Strabo, *Geographica* 14.6 (681–85), trans. C. Cobham in *Excerpta Cypria: Materials for a History of Cyprus* (Cambridge, 1908), 3.

Synekdemos (sixth century) as endowed with fifteen cities.¹⁸⁰ The literary sources of the late antique period repeatedly praise its abundance of wine, oil, and wheat; Ammianus Marcellinus famously celebrated “this Cyprus so fertile and rich in produce of every kind that without the need of any external assistance, by its nature alone it builds cargo ships from the keel to the topmast sail.”¹⁸¹

The fecundity of Cyprus, as Metcalf and others have pointed out, depended heavily on its soil type and geology, which made possible different types of landscape and varied levels of agricultural production.¹⁸² Indeed, the island can be roughly divided into four geomorphological areas: the northern coastal strip stretching to the east into the Karpas peninsula, with gentle hills suitable for pasture and with a humid climate, a few wild rivers, and two important harbors, Lapithos-Lapta and Kyrenia; the Troodos mountains located on the southwestern part of the island, running parallel to the southern coast and rich in forests; the coastal plain of the southern coast with its coves and harbors (Paphos, Amathos, and Kourion), where the fertile soil, watered by many rivers, made possible the cultivation of grains, vegetables, and citrus fruit; and, finally, the Mesaoria plain, famous for its high fertility and dotted with eastward-looking cities such as Kytherea, Thamassos, and Salamis-Constantia.¹⁸³

Unfortunately, the number of witnesses to the flourishing agricultural wealth of Cyprus and its role

in shipbuilding—a direct consequence of the island’s strategic location along the trans-Mediterranean routes—dropped in the passage from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages. Apart from the accounts of the large amounts of booty stripped from the island by the Arab raids,¹⁸⁴ the only literary evidence for Cyprus’s retaining at least part of its former wealth is the above-mentioned treaty signed by the Byzantines and the Muslims in 686–88 CE, which required the stunning sum of 7,000 *nomismata* or dinars to be paid equally to emperor and caliph from local tax revenues.¹⁸⁵ ‘Abd al-Malik added 1,000 dinars to the Cypriot tax, though the original terms were later restored and remained in force until the Abbasid period.¹⁸⁶ This large sum of money suggests considerable prosperity and wealth on the island, as well as the continuing ability of the fiscal structures of both rival polities to extract and redistribute the local surplus.

Such a picture disagrees somewhat with the results of a series of rural surveys conducted in different areas of the island.¹⁸⁷ These depict a formerly thriving commercial and agricultural province with a densely settled hinterland, which in the latter part of the seventh century must have experienced an abrupt change. According to Murray McClellan and Marcus Rautman, “Some coastal sites (Amathos, Kourion and Soli) were

180 See Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Kitāb al-Masālik* (n. 71 above), 112; al-Muqaddasī, *Kitāb Ahsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma’rifat al-Aqālīm*, trans. Cobham in *Excerpta Cypria*, 5; Hierocles *Synekdemos* 706–7, ed. E. Honigsmann, *Le Synekdemus d’Hiéroclès et l’opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre* (Brussels, 1939), 49–70.

181 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 14.8, 14, trans. J. C. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, Loeb Classical Library, 3 vols. (1935–39; reprint, Cambridge, Mass., 1971–72), 1:73. See also Palladas (4th century), *Palatine Anthology* 9.487; Synesios of Cyrene, *ep.* 148 (late 4th century); Nonnos of Panopolis, *Dionysiaka* 5.611–15 (first half of the 5th century); Flavius Corippus, *In Laudem Iustini* (6th century). For translations of these authors concerning Cyprus, see Pohlsander, *Sources for the History of Cyprus* (n. 50 above), 8 (Palladas), 20 (Synesios), 26 (Nonnos); and L. Roberts, *Latin Texts from the First Century B.C. to the Seventeenth Century A.D.*, vol. 8 of *Sources for the History of Cyprus*, ed. P. W. Wallace and A. G. Orphanides (Albany, N.Y., 2000), 53 (Flavius Corippus).

182 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus* (n. 1 above), 61–68.

183 Guillou, “La géographie historique” (n. 5 above), 11–12; Malamut, *Les îles* (n. 2 above), 51–62.

184 Dionysius of Tel-Mahré, *Chronicle*, 97; al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūh* (n. 71, above), 2:347–50, 347–50.

185 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 363, trans. Mango and Scott (n. 13 above), 506; al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* 13.237. Also al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh* (n. 64 above), 7:258; Qudāma ibn Ja’far (writing in the 10th century) reports 7,200 dinars; see Qoudama b. Ja’far, *Kitāp al-Karādji*, in de Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. 6 (n. 71 above), 306.

186 Al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* 13.237–38.

187 The best and most consistently published are the so-called Sydney Cyprus Survey Project, focused on the Mitsero-Politiko area: A. B. Knapp and M. Given, “Social Landscapes and Social Space: The Sydney Cyprus Survey Project,” in *Archaeological Field Survey in Cyprus: Past History, Future Potentials*, ed. M. Iacovou, BSA Studies 11 (Athens, 2004), 77–93; the Kalavassos-Kopetra Survey: McClellan and Rautman, “Where Have All the Farmers Gone?” (n. 4 above); M. C. McClellan, M. L. Rautman, and I. A. Todd, “The Vasilikos Valley in Late Antiquity,” in Bryer and Gheorghallides, *Sweet Land of Cyprus* (n. 13 above), 423; M. L. Rautman, *A Cypriot Village of Late Antiquity: Kalavassos-Kopetra in the Vasilikos Valley* (Portsmouth, R.I., 2003); and the Canadian Paleopaphos Survey Project: L. W. Sørensen and D. W. Rupp, eds., *The Land of Paphian Aphrodite*, vol. 2, *The Canadian Paleopaphos Survey Project: Artifact and Ecofactual Studies* (Göteborg, 1993).

almost completely abandoned and others (Paphos, Constantia and Kyrenia) appear significantly reduced; few traces of human activity were found in the Cypriot countryside between the eighth and the tenth century: the reduction of urban activity and the abandonment of rural sites can be explained by the general political instability of the period.”¹⁸⁸ As I noted in the introduction to this article, that notion seems to reflect mainly an emphasis on the (supposedly catastrophic) Arab raids, reliance on archaeological surveys that focused primarily on the Roman period, the lack of evidence from the north, and a dearth of knowledge about the local material culture of the seventh and eighth centuries.¹⁸⁹ A careful, detailed analysis of all the surveys conducted in Cyprus makes clear that some sites—such as that around the basilica of Hagias Trias, the so-called Kormakiti peninsula in the northwestern corner of the island, and the Akamas area—continued to be frequented well into the eighth century.¹⁹⁰ In addition, locally made pottery provisionally dated to the late seventh to early eighth century and evidence of building activities in the very same period have been found in the Kalavassos-Kopetra and Mitsero-Politikos areas;¹⁹¹ elsewhere, as in the Cape Drepanum area, the abandonment of an important coastal settlement had nothing to do with the advent of the Arabs.¹⁹²

This is not to say that the countryside did not begin to experience an economic or a demographic decline in the second half of the seventh century or perhaps

earlier.¹⁹³ Rather, I am arguing for a reassessment of the evidence at our disposal, which shows economic vitality persisting among local elites and in urban centers and does not point to a catastrophic upheaval in rural life.¹⁹⁴ Such a reassessment should also entail the nature and level of domestic and household production,¹⁹⁵ as well as the patterns of local, regional, and transregional exchange activity. In both areas, we need a careful review of the ceramic evidence regarded as the best guide to the scale of the economic system. So far, this task has barely begun.¹⁹⁶ As already intimated, the different types of pottery (amphorae, fine tablewares, or coarse cooking wares) and their movements provide us with a range of information: “that the routes taken by amphorae and fine wares are different is partly explicable through the different interests of exports for

193 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 245; Malamut, *Les îles*, 434–55. Malamut points out, however, that some signs of decline may have appeared after the middle of the 5th and especially the great plague of the mid-6th century, regarded as a clear economic turning point in Byzantine economic history. The result, in conjunction with other factors such as Slavic invasions, earthquakes, and climate change, was population loss in some cities and the countryside. See A. E. Laiou and C. Morisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge, 2007), 38–42, with further bibliography.

194 Malamut, *Les îles*, 385–96.

195 Rautman, “Handmade Pottery” (n. 34 above), 97.

196 The work has been undertaken in part in Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 229–46; Touma, “Chypre” (n. 51 above); Vroom, *After Antiquity* (n. 104 above), 53–55; and see Pamela Armstrong’s recent groundbreaking contribution, “Trade.” Usually scholars have published (often after long delay) analyses of evidence from single sites; for example, Salamis-Constantia: J. Hayes, “Problèmes de la céramique des VIIème–IXème siècles à Salamine et à Chypre,” in Yon, *Salamine de Chypre* (n. 111 above), 375–88; Diederichs, *Céramiques hellénistiques* (n. 127 above); Kourion: J. Hayes, “Clay Lamps,” in *Kourion: Excavations in the Episcopal Precinct*, ed. A. H. S. Megaw (Washington, D.C., 2007), 479–83; J. Hayes, “Pottery,” in *ibid.*, 435–75; Paphos: J. Hayes, “Hellenistic and Roman Pottery Deposits from ‘Saranda Kolones’ Castle Site at Paphos,” *BSA* 98 (2003): 447–516; S. Domesticha and D. Michaelides, “The Excavation of a Late Roman 1 Amphora Kiln in Paphos,” in *La Céramique Byzantine et Proto-Islamique en Syrie-Jordanie (IV^e–VIII^e siècles apr. J.-C.): Actes du colloque tenu à Amman les 3, 4, 5 décembre 1994*, ed. E. Villeneuve and P. Watson (Beirut, 2001), 289–96; Smadar Gabrieli, Jackson, and Kaldeli, “Stumbling into the Darkness” (n. 51 above); Amathos: E. Procopiou, “Αμαθούντα: Ανατολική νεκρόπολη; Τάφος οστεοφυλάκιο του 7ου μ.Χ. αιώνα,” *Reports of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* (1995): 249–77. However, these contributions are often more concerned with the Greek and Roman pottery and overlook the sherds produced by Byzantine layers.

188 McClellan and Rautman, “Where Have All the Farmers Gone?,” 86.

189 Papacostas, “Byzantine Cyprus” (n. 33 above), 30.

190 A. Langdale, “The Architecture and Mosaics of the Basilica of Agias Trias in the Karpas Peninsula, Cyprus,” *Journal of Cyprus Studies* 15.37 (2009): 1–18. On the Kormakiti peninsula, see H. W. Catling, “An Early Byzantine Pottery Factory at Dhiorios in Cyprus,” *Levant* 4 (1972): 1–82; H. W. Catling and A. I. Dikigoropoulos, “The Kornos Cave: An Early Byzantine Site in Cyprus,” *Levant* 2 (1970): 37–62. On Akamas, see Papacostas, “Byzantine Cyprus,” 44, with further bibliography; and J. Lund, “Transport Amphorae as a Possible Source for the Land Use and Economic History of Akamas Peninsula, Western Cyprus,” in Bonifay and Trégia, *LRCW* 2 (n. 51 above), 781–89; Feifer and Hayes, “Ancient Akamas and the Abandonment of Sites in Seventh Century Cyprus” (n. 4 above), 62–69; Papageorgiou, “Cities and Countryside” (n. 34 above), 35–48.

191 Armstrong, “Trade,” 168–77. On Kalavassos-Kopetra, see also below.

192 Papacostas, “Economy of Late Antique Cyprus” (n. 52 above), 116.

profit and state-backed transportation . . . and partly also through the resistance to (or unprofitability for the exporters of) imports” in some regions, though markets were always determined by what goods were in demand and how food was prepared.¹⁹⁷ Amphorae provide invaluable insights into commercial networks and interregional socioeconomic processes:¹⁹⁸ they were indeed a receptacle for such commodities as wine, olive oil, and, less often, wheat,¹⁹⁹ as they were used for the long-distance transportation of bulk goods (which was always viewed as cheaper by boat). In Cyprus, we witness both local production and a considerable importation of goods continuing well into the eighth century. The former was mainly of the so-called Late Roman 1 type of amphora, which was manufactured on the island, in southern Anatolia, and on the Levantine coast.²⁰⁰ Indeed, kilns that produced these amphorae have been found near Nea Paphos, Amathos, Kourion, and Akamas.²⁰¹ But the Cypriot products were different in fabric from those manufactured elsewhere. Moreover, according to Papacostas, “a development in production method and typology has been documented: the usual forms were worn out by the Arab invasions and the usual types are not found anymore.”²⁰²

Although one may believe an abrupt change less likely than a transition along the lines of that experienced by Syrian and Palestinian material culture,²⁰³ local copies of LR1 unquestionably appeared in Cyprus during the late seventh century, and were later replaced by the so-called globular jugs (also known as the post-Late Roman 2 amphora). A recent study

comparing deposits from the Sinai desert with those yielded by the excavations at the theater in Paphos have shown that both LR1 (also unearthed at Kourion) and globular amphorae (made in Cyprus, according to the petrographic analysis) of the late seventh century were found at Ostrakine (North Sinai).²⁰⁴ The Egyptian link is further bolstered by the presence on the island of so-called Late Roman 7 Egyptian amphorae, called the most common wine container of the Mediterranean and documented in eighth-century layers stratigraphically excavated at Paphos.²⁰⁵ Here also bag-shaped (or Late Roman 5) amphorae, dated to the late seventh and early eighth centuries, have been found; their fabric identifies their origin in the Nile Delta and the Middle Nile Valley.²⁰⁶ For context, one should also consider the diffusion of Egyptian Red Slip Ware (type A), whose export continued in the eighth century, in many Cypriot sites (Salamis-Constantia, Limassol, and Kourion); the mid- to late seventh-century Caesarea type 1 amphorae from Egypt found at Kourion; and the Cypriot pottery made until the late seventh century, found in abundance along the northern coast, central delta, and northern Sinai.²⁰⁷

From these data one can easily begin to trace a commercial network involving Cyprus and the regions under Umayyad rule, such as Syria and Palestine. Adding more detail to the sketch are the Late Roman 5 amphorae of Palestinian production recovered from late seventh- and eighth-century layers at Paphos, Salamis-Constantia, and Amathos, which match the so-called Caesarea Type 3 amphorae, possibly carrying wine, found at Kourion and are similar in typology to examples found at Khirbat al-Mafjar that were probably produced around Bet Shean–Scythopolis.²⁰⁸

197 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History* (n. 25 above), 495.

198 Smadar Gabrieli, Jackson, and Kaldeli, “Stumbling into the Darkness,” 793.

199 Armstrong, “Trade,” 158.

200 Ibid., 163; Touma, “Chypre,” 268; and Hayes, “Pottery,” 437, conclude that the production of these amphorae ceased in the mid-seventh century, but this position has been recently been put into question by new evidence from 8th-century layers in Crete and Chios. See also Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 498.

201 Nea Paphos: Domesticha and Michaelides, “Excavation of a Late Roman 1 Amphora Kiln”; Amathos: Touma, “Chypre,” 267; Kourion: Hayes, “Pottery,” 437; two other places in Cyprus: Lund, “Transport Amphorae,” 788.

202 Papacostas, “Byzantine Cyprus,” 70.

203 Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria* (n. 7 above), 48–70.

204 Smadar Gabrieli, Jackson, and Kaldeli, “Stumbling into the Darkness,” 792. On the Kourion finds, see Hayes, “Pottery,” 437.

205 P. Ballet, “Relations céramiques entre l’Égypte et Chypre à l’époque gréco-romaine et byzantine,” in *Hellenistic and Roman Pottery in the Eastern Mediterranean: Advances in Scientific Studies: Acts of the II Nieborów Pottery Workshop. Nieborów, 18–20 December 1993*, ed. H. Meyza and Y. Młynarczyk (Warsaw, 1995), 17.

206 Hayes, “Hellenistic and Roman Pottery,” 495–502.

207 On Red Slip Ware, see Hayes, “Problèmes de la céramique,” 377; on Caesarea type 1 amphorae, see idem, “Pottery,” 437; on Cypriot pottery, see Ballet, “Relations céramiques,” 17; Hayes, “Pottery,” 436.

208 Touma, “Chypre,” 268–70; K. W. Jacobsen, “Regional Distribution of Transport Amphorae in Cyprus in the Late

Late seventh-century imitations of Syrian amphorae have been also found in Cyprus.²⁰⁹ Indeed, as will be seen, the provenance of these containers would match that of fine and coarse wares. For instance, the so-called decorated buff ware vessels manufactured at Khirbat al-Mafjar but also found in Jerusalem, pointing to a continuous occupation of the site until the ninth century, have also been unearthed in excavations at Saranda Kolones and Nea Paphos.²¹⁰ On the other side of the exchange link, typical eighth-century domestic and cooking wares produced in Cyprus—the thin-walled, wheel-ridged vessels also known as Dhiorios cooking pots—have been found in Umayyad deposits in Beirut and in eighth-century layers in Palestine.²¹¹

The interaction between the neighboring Umayyad regions and Cyprus revealed by careful attention to ceramics implies that the movement of goods and contacts with Islamic centers of production persisted. Data derived from other sources, including the pilgrimage accounts mentioned above, the so-called Arab-Byzantine coinage, and later literary and geographical reports of Arab authors, also support the existence of such movement.

Journeys like those of Willibald and of Epiphanius the monk, who used Cyprus as a stepping-stone for a trip to the Holy Land in the eighth and the ninth century, respectively, “contradict the pervasive notion of the Islamic and Christian dominions as separate worlds which interacted only through conflict.”²¹² In fact, we can with confidence treat the movements of pilgrims and of diplomats like the Phangoumeis toward regions under Islamic sway as proxy data on

merchant shipping.²¹³ Ceramic evidence suggests that interregional commerce used Cyprus as a convenient hub, possibly taking advantage of the island’s peculiar political status; this claim can be further bolstered by an examination of both the late seventh- to early eighth-century Arab-Byzantine and the post-reform coinage yielded by excavations in Cyprus.²¹⁴ Copper coins dated to the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century and issued at Homs, Damascus, and Tiberias have been found at Saranda Kolones (four specimens), Salamis-Constantia (six specimens), and Kourion (six specimens, among them a gold dinar of 720/21 CE).²¹⁵ The complex issues of imagery and prototypes of these coins (see fig. 7) suggest both that political, commercial, and cultural relations were maintained between the two empires and that the “not-so-monetarized” economy here, as in Syria and Palestine, reflected different ways of manifesting wealth in social terms rather than the waning of exchange and trade.²¹⁶

The material evidence for commercial exchange across eastern Mediterranean political boundaries²¹⁷ concurs with the references to trade and commerce between Cyprus and the Muslim world transmitted by the Arab sources. As noted above, I am fully aware that “questions have arisen on the trustworthiness of Arabic sources, especially those describing the early period of Islam[, as] historical events are [always] narrated later than the time they occurred [and] common topoi [such as the] personal feelings and ideologies of the authors influence their works.”²¹⁸ However, as Howard-Johnston, Conrad, and others have demonstrated, these problems can be circumvented by avoiding generalizations and by researching critically not only particular authors but also each part of their work.²¹⁹

Roman Period,” in *Transport Amphorae and Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean: Acts of the International Colloquium at the Danish Institute at Athens, September 26–29, 2002*, ed. J. Eiring and J. Lund (Athens, 2004), 143–49; Hayes, “Hellenistic and Roman Pottery Deposits,” 487–89; D. C. Baranki, “The Pottery from Khirbat El Mafjar,” *QDAP* 10 (1940–42): 76–77.

209 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (n. 43 above), 590.

210 J. Magness, *The Archaeology of the Early Islamic Settlement in Palestine* (Winona Lake, Ind., 2003), 152; Hayes, “Hellenistic and Roman Pottery Deposits,” 479–85.

211 Armstrong, “Trade,” 165. On these cooking pots, see Catling, “Early Byzantine Pottery Factory”; Armstrong, “Trade,” 165–66; Rautman, “Handmade Pottery,” 89.

212 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 209.

213 Ibid., 274.

214 Zavagno, “‘Betwixt the Greeks and the Saracens’” (n. 12 above), 474–75.

215 Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus*, 456.

216 Walmsley, “Coinage and the Economy of Syria-Palestine,” 39–40. On the issues of imagery and prototypes, see C. Foss, *Arab-Byzantine Coinage: An Introduction, with a Catalogue of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection* (Washington, D.C.–Cambridge, Mass., 2008), vii–xi and cat. no. 60 (depicted opposite as fig. 7).

217 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History*, 510–11.

218 Christides, *Image of Cyprus* (n. 3 above), 123–24.

219 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis* (n. 18 above); N. Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest: Text and Image in*



FIG. 7.
Bilingual series
copper coin (mint
of Ba'albek). Foss,
Arab-Byzantine Coins,
no. 60 (reproduced
with permission of
Dumbarton Oaks
Research Library
and Collection)

The problem of the transmitters of Arab tradition must be taken into consideration, as we know that the first recorded historians of Islam, on whom scholars such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī, and al-Muqaddasī heavily relied, tried to rearrange the traditions found in their days (the late eighth century) into a more coherent chronological framework.²²⁰ Indeed, Islamic historiography is a multivocal experience: “it is not a record of what happened so much as it is a record of what different, multiple people have said about what happened.”²²¹ Keeping these caveats in mind, we can nonetheless view the evidence from Arab literary sources concerning trade between Cyprus and the Muslim lands as supporting the continuation of usual practices and habits.

Beginning with the ninth and tenth centuries, the Arab sources repeatedly refer to the prosperity of the island. The tenth-century geographer Ibn Hawqal, for instance, mentions that in Cyprus “there is mastic of good quality and abundant gum. One can find silk,

flax, wheat, barley, cereals and so much abundance that cannot be described.”²²² Much later (in the twelfth century), al-Idrīsī reports that in Cyprus one can find cultivated lands, villages, mountains, forests, crops, and cattle.²²³ References to mercantile activities are also common: al-Mas'ūdī, also in the tenth century, writes of the adventures of an Arab former prisoner who sailed to Constantinople from Syria via Cyprus disguised as a merchant.²²⁴ Though the story is fictional and set in the Umayyad era, it reveals that direct trade relations between the Byzantine and the Umayyad empires involving Cyprus were regarded as feasible. Eventually al-Muqaddasī in his tenth-century *Description of Syria* mentions the island as offering many advantages to Muslims engaged in trade, pointing to its great quantities of merchandise, the goods produced there,

Early Islam (Oxford, 2011); Noth, *Early Arabic Historical Tradition* (n. 64 above); Cameron and Conrad, *Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 1 (n. 63 above); I. Lavins, “The Eastern Connection of the Mediterranean Sea to the Surrounding Sea in the Cartographic Heritage of the al-Balkhī School: Antique Exaggeration or Real Trade Routes?” in *Fostered by Its Shores*, ed. Çaykent and Zavagno, forthcoming.

220 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, 372; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: Sources* (n. 66 above), 193–97.

221 Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest*, 23.

222 Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb sūrat al-ard*, trans. J.-H. Kramers and G. Wiet, *Configuration de la terre*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1964), 1:184. Born in Nisibis, Ibn Hawqal traveled extensively during the second half of the 10th century. He was asked by another famous contemporary geographer, al-Istakhri, to edit and complete the latter's work, which he published with many alterations and additions, often based on eyewitness observations. He completed the maps drawn by his predecessors but paid more attention to the text, which appears independently of the maps. See Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 127.

223 al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-mushtāq fi ikhtarāq al-āfāq*, trans. Chevalier Jaubert, *La première géographie de l'Occident*, rev. A.-L. Nef ([Paris], 1999), 643–44.

224 al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Ma'ādin al-Jawhar* 8.75–88, trans. P. Lunde and C. Stone, *The Meadows of Gold* (London, 1989), 320–24. See also Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 130; and Mansouri, *Chypre* (n. 3 above), 84.

and its proximity to the coast (requiring only one night and day of navigation).²²⁵ He also recounts that eighteen ships loaded with silver and gold sailed from Cyprus to decorate the mosque of Damascus under the caliphate of al-Walid.²²⁶ As Papacostas has stressed, this passage might refer to the export of Byzantine glass mosaic tesserae; as John Rosser has stressed, these were perhaps linked to the ruins of an eighth- to ninth-century glass factory excavated at Saranda Kolones.²²⁷ However, rather than dwelling on such a hypothesis, I would rather focus on the shipment of fifty Cypriot cedar trunks to the patriarch of Jerusalem to help with the early ninth-century refurbishment of the Holy Sepulcher,²²⁸ a well-known incident that confirms the existence of multiple lines of communication and complex levels of interregional commerce between the Muslim Levant and Cyprus. Further confirmation is provided by the Palestinian lamps found in the eighth-century bench deposits at Salamis.²²⁹ Some of these goods spread to North Africa: eighth-century cooking pots of gray-black type with a long neck and two large handles have been documented as imported to Salamis from Carthage, and the amphorae with Kufic inscriptions found at Paphos and dated to the late seventh or early eighth century may have been manufactured at Djerba.²³⁰

Evidence for medium- and long-distance commercial exchange should be also set against other data pointing to substantial commerce within the political boundaries of the empire. I have already mentioned the Glazed White Ware pottery type, manufactured in Constantinople and documented in different sites across the island: according to Chris Wickham, "GWW replaced Phocian RS [Red Slip] as the dominant fine ware [and though with] a much more restricted distribution . . . was found on several of the southern islands, notably Crete and Cyprus, showing continued exchange links with the capital some 800 km away (nearly twice as far in the case of

Cyprus)."²³¹ With regard to Constantinople's central influence on regional economies, and all evidence of the persistence of military and civil officials and the fiscal administration on the island, one should also consider the findspots of the so-called Cypriot Red Slip Ware.²³² The most common fine ware circulating on the island, it was manufactured in Paphos and Pisidia; its distribution reveals an extensive trade network centered on Cyprus and stretching to the Asia Minor coastline, the Aegean, and the Levant. Armstrong comments that "Cypriot Red Slip Wares have been found at Anemurium where eighth-century 'Form 9' have been yielded together with a new form (so-called 'Well-Form') also found in Limyra (as securely dated to the eighth century). The latter could be possibly associated with the so-called Hayes Form 6 recently found at the excavations at Paphos–Saranda Kolones (originally dated to late sixth–early seventh century)."²³³ It is worth noting that this trade circuit partly overlaps with the distribution patterns of amphorae (see fig. 8). In Emporion (Chios), for example, this type of fine ware has been found in association with ninth-century specimens of LR1; moreover, the interregional trade network associated with Cypriot Red Slip Ware extended to the Nile and Caesarea and along the North African coast via Crete (Pseira) to Carthage, although it did not reach mainland Greece and Constantinople.²³⁴

Notwithstanding its role in far-reaching trade connections, Cyprus was also affected by the localization of production and regionalization of exchange that characterized much of the economy of the Byzantine Empire from the late seventh to the early eighth century.²³⁵ Yet the picture that emerges from the analysis of Cypriot locally made pottery²³⁶ suggests that the isolation following the fragmentation of regional industries was suffered less by this island (and less by Sicily as well, though for different reasons) than

225 Cobham, *Excerpta Cypria* (n. 179 above), 5.

226 Papacostas, "Byzantine Cyprus" (n. 33 above), 74.

227 Ibid., 75; J. Rosser, "Excavations at Saranda Kolones, Paphos, Cyprus," *DOP* 39 (1985): 81–97.

228 Eutychios of Alexandria, *Annales*, ed. L. Cheikho, 2 vols., CSCO 50–51, *Scriptores arabici* 3 (Paris, 1906–09), 2:55–56.

229 Hayes, "Problèmes de la céramique" (n. 196 above), 377.

230 Ibid., 378; Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 64–65.

231 Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (n. 45 above), 785–87.

232 Armstrong, "Trade" (n. 30 above), 174.

233 Ibid., 170–71.

234 Ibid.

235 Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 780–94; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: History* (n. 25 above), 485–90; Laiou and Morrisson, *Byzantine Economy* (n. 193 above), 38–89; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (n. 43 above), 281–319.

236 Rautman, "Handmade Pottery" (n. 34 above), 85–89.

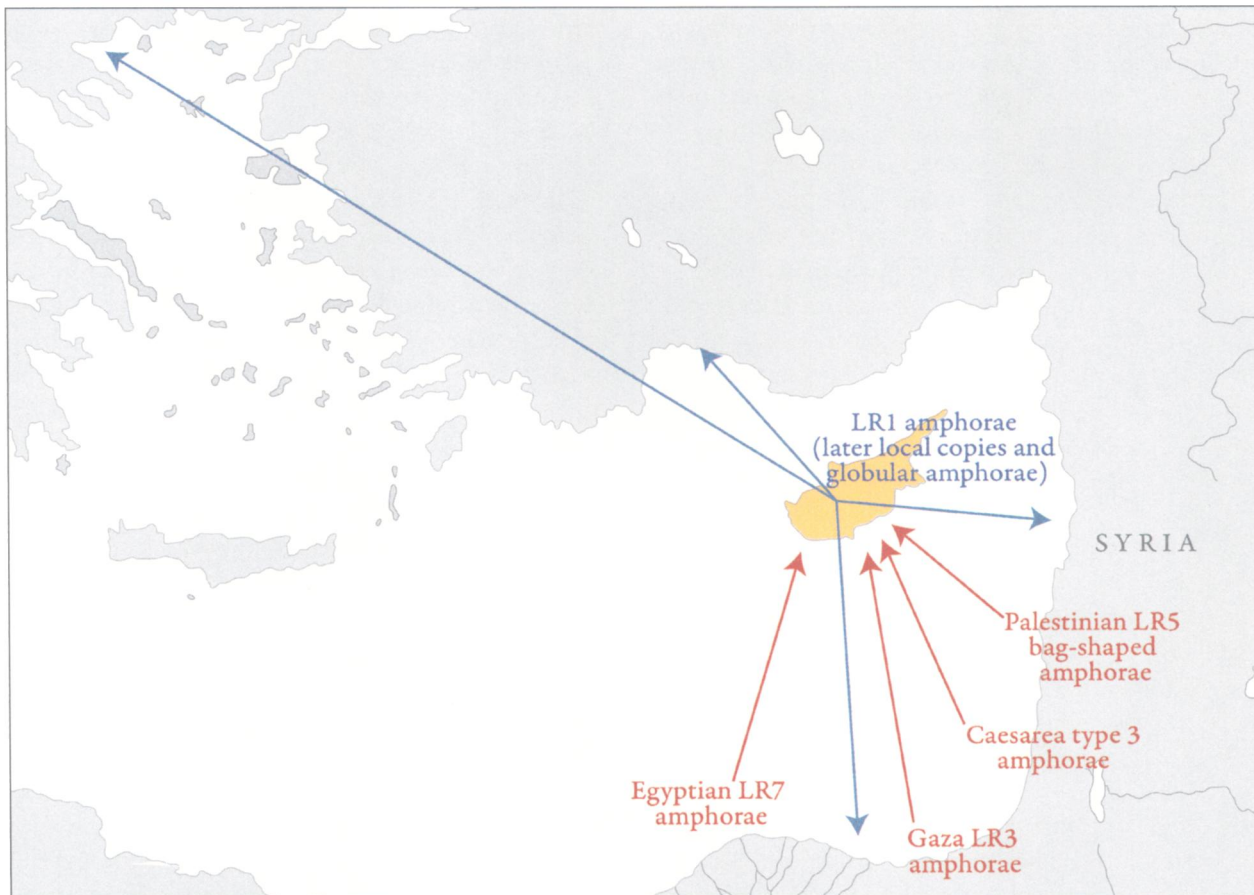


FIG. 8. Exchange pattern of amphorae from and to Cyprus in the 7th and 8th centuries (drawn by K. Sparkes)

by areas of the Byzantine heartland. Here I agree with Rautman's points that more often than not, handmade pottery is understood as a sign of shifting economic concerns and narrowing patterns of exchange, although its practical and economic utility ensured that its production would persist in the rural household.²³⁷ Though it seems likely that the volume of shipping and the amount of local production were declining, hand- and wheel-form pottery, ranging from plain tableware to cooking ware and storage vessels, continued to be manufactured in Cyprus well into the eighth century.²³⁸ The so-called plain vessels with hollow bases and plain lids, the dimple-bottom jugs from Kornos Cave, as

237 Ibid., 97.

238 Armstrong, "Trade," 167; Rautman, "Handmade Pottery," 85–88; Smadar Gabrieli, Jackson, and Kaldeli, "Stumbling into the Darkness" (n. 51 above), 799–801.

well as the coarse-fabric cooking wares in various shapes with thick walls found in late seventh-century layers at Kalavassos-Kopetra and in the early eighth-century deposits at Kourion,²³⁹ reveal a confident use of technology, traditional manufacturing techniques, and skilled workmanship.

Seventh-century handmade wares in Cyprus show not a fundamental cultural break after the disruptions of the Arab raids but rather a smooth shift in the scale of pottery production,²⁴⁰ suggesting a similarity to Syrian and Palestinian material culture. In the Levant only a modest development of pottery is discernible during the seventh century, followed by a period of accelerated change in the late seventh and

239 Rautman, "Handmade Pottery," 90; on Kornos Cave, see Catling, "Early Byzantine Pottery Factory" (n. 190 above), 43–82.

240 Rautman, "Handmade Pottery," 89.

the beginning of the eighth century. This change was neither systemic nor culturally radical.²⁴¹ By the same token, late seventh-century Cypriot handmade wares revealed no revolutionary changes, for their typologies and technologies were already known in Cyprus well before the arrival of the Arabs.²⁴² The ceramic kilns excavated at Dhiorios provide more evidence for the conclusion that potting technique and manufacture in Cyprus did not abruptly change when the Arabs raided. These were mostly of traditional type; only in the eighth century at the earliest did they show development with the introduction of a typology imported from the Levant—the so-called Islamic kiln, which was meant to be reused.²⁴³ The distribution of Dhiorios cooking wares was not completely localized, for products from these kilns have been discovered in Anemurium (on the southern coast of Asia Minor) and as far away as the Adriatic, in addition to the widespread finds of similar vessels across the whole island.²⁴⁴ Locally produced pottery included storage vessels like the so-called Late Roman 13 amphorae found in eighth-century deposits at Kourion, with a manufacturing center at Amathos.²⁴⁵

Although we know nothing about levels of production and patterns of consumption, the persistence of local manufacture of pottery suggests that Cyprus had a network composed of local aristocrats (benefiting from the fertile surrounding agricultural district) and members of the administrative provincial government, the upper echelons of the military and fiscal apparatus, episcopal clergy, and the civilian population. All were important to supporting local demand, artisanal workshops, and commercial activities even in a demonetized economy. The existence of local industries has been documented (albeit poorly) in Cyprus for the period under examination: rural-oriented activities like olive oil presses (see fig. 9) found in Salamis, Alassa, Paphos, and Dhiorios are joined by food-processing activities, for instance sugar cane and possibly salt extraction, and by factories producing glass vessels, such as those found at Saranda Kolones (dated

to the late eighth or early ninth century) and Soloi (dated to the seventh to ninth century).²⁴⁶

Finally, one should also remember that to understand how the medieval economy worked requires looking beyond the material evidence and considering the human commodity of slaves,²⁴⁷ an often invisible commerce that has left virtually no trace in literary sources or the archaeological record. Michael McCormick has shown that in this period the demand for slaves increased, at least in the Arab world; indeed, we possess references to Cypriots taken prisoner and relocated to Muslim lands in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. One is the passage from Anastasios of Sinai mentioned above; another is the forced removal to Syria of large numbers of islanders in 743 (all returned home one year later).²⁴⁸ According to al-Ṭabarī, the raid staged by Hārūn al-Rashīd in 806 led to the transfer of 16,000 Cypriot prisoners to Raqqa: some of them, like the (arch)bishop, were then sold for 2,000 dinars each.²⁴⁹ The latter episode may be connected to the so-called new system and heightened scale of slave hunting that McCormick documented for ninth-century Sicily during the African invasion: “The Arab raiders were as eager to collect saleable men and women as to plunder treasure. . . . [T]hey expanded profits by entering the ransom business[. . . a] process . . . best attested for the Cretan Arabs.”²⁵⁰ That the slave trade was increasing in the late eighth and early ninth centuries is also shown by references to the exchange of prisoners in contemporary sources like al-Masʿūdī.²⁵¹ The growth of the Arab slave trade led in turn to the rise of local markets close to the “hunting grounds.”²⁵² Indeed, in the early tenth century John Kaminiates describes the coasts of Cyprus (see fig. 10) as a place where Arab slave

241 Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria* (n. 7 above), 69–70.

242 Rautman, “Handmade Pottery,” 92.

243 Armstrong, “Trade,” 167.

244 Ibid.; Rautman, “Handmade Pottery,” 90.

245 Domesticha and Michaelides, “Excavation of a Late Roman 1 Amphora Kiln” (n. 196 above), 292; Touma, “Chypre” (n. 51 above), 268.

246 S. Hadjisavvas, *Olive Oil Processing in Cyprus: From the Bronze Age to the Byzantine Period* (Göteborg, 1992); on food processing, see Papacostas, “Byzantine Cyprus,” 71; on glass production, see Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus* (n. 1 above), 250, with further bibliography.

247 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 729–77.

248 Agapius, *Kitāb al-Unwan* (n. 72 above), 511–12; al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* (n. 18 above), 13, 238; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrikh* (n. 64 above), 7:227.

249 Al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb* 13, 238; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrikh*, 8:320–22.

250 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 769.

251 Christides, *Image of Cyprus*, 43.

252 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 770.



FIG. 9.
Oil press at
the so-called
Huilerie complex
in Salamis-
Constantia
(photo by author)

traders could dock, stay briefly, and even take a bath before reaching the Syrian harbors.²⁵³

In sum, the evidence presented points to shipping and trade using Cyprus as a hub across transregional and intraregional networks carrying goods of uncertain volume and contents. On the one hand, one of the main trading routes identified by McCormick began in Constantinople and linked the Aegean with the southern shore of Asia Minor, eventually reaching Cyprus.²⁵⁴ Here localized and medium-distance exchange systems coexisted, with the state playing the major role in the movement of goods; they mainly involved the major political centers, but they also involved cities where aristocratic wealth remained concentrated, such as Ephesos, Gortyn, and Athens.²⁵⁵ On the other hand, the island offered unique convenience, as both the Arab and Byzantine empires deliberately used its unclear and volatile political status to attract traders and merchandise from all areas. Thus

the location of the island at the intersection of two regional economies benefited from trade networks that reached outside the territories within the imperial boundaries. Cyprus, in the seventh and eighth centuries (and possibly beyond),²⁵⁶ had manifold relationships with the Islamic world, as merchants, pilgrims, and probably slaves accompanied goods in their travels to the Levant. Before and even after 700 CE, the island was linked with Egypt (and its complex hierarchy of regional, subregional, and microregional productions, underpinned by the high productivity of Nilotic agriculture) and with Syria and Palestine (and their localized economies, focused on continuous demand from such urban centers as Jerusalem, Pella, Jerash, Scythopolis, and Aleppo).²⁵⁷

253 John Kaminiates, *De expugnatione Thessalonicae*, ed. G. Böhlig (Berlin, 1973), 77.

254 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 589.

255 Zavagno, *Cities in Transition* (n. 8 above).

256 Evidence for 9th-century economic life in Cyprus is scarce and obscure but fascinating nevertheless: see Armstrong, "Trade," 170–71; Hayes, "Problèmes de la céramique" (n. 196 above), 377–88; and idem, "Hellenistic and Roman Pottery Deposits" (n. 196 above), 502–3.

257 Hayes, "Problèmes de la céramique," 377–80; Ballet, "Relations céramiques" (n. 205 above). High-quality local ceramics were produced well into the 8th century; see Zavagno, "Betwixt



FIG. 10. The Cyprus coastline from Lambousa-Laptha (photo by author)

This series of interlocking economies in turn left its mark on the Cypriot elites, affecting their levels of consumption and demand and the intensity of local production and regional exchange. Even at this level we witness a persistence of artisanal production, expressed mainly in the different varieties of local fine and coarse ware and of containers for local agricultural products, but also related to other types of manufacture in Cyprus (like glass). Of course, such production could not counteract the general trend of localization and regionalization of monetary exchange experienced by the island, as well as the rest of the empire; or offset the centrality of the Byzantine fiscal and military apparatus in influencing the island's social, economic, and political trajectories; or reverse the decline in interregional exchange within the empire during the passage from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages. But the economic prominence of Cyprus does help us draw a different picture of its history: a picture in which the island is a strategic stepping-stone for the main flows of trade; a picture in which a no-man's-land

is recast as a much-frequented and attractive hub for travelers and goods—the island of merchandise, goods, and populous cities portrayed by al-Muqaddasī; a picture, finally, that presents a supposed eastern Mediterranean caesura between two opposed empires as instead a link connecting two different cultures.

This article has raised significant questions about the traditional view of a Cypriot economy in a decline caused by the Arab raids; by the crisis of the imperial governmental structure as reflected in the treaty of 686–88 CE, which supposedly ushered the island into a political and administrative limbo; and by the disruption of urban structures only partly offset by the resilience of ecclesiastical (but rurally oriented) power. It has done so by using primary sources to reject the idea that Cyprus fell into oblivion and by moving away from an archaeological approach based solely on monuments, instead carefully sifting through other types of evidence. The newly developed analysis of local and imported ceramics, the examination of seals (and coins, to some extent), and research into settlement profiles have revealed an unsuspected economic soundness in seventh- and eighth-century Cyprus, grounded in the

the Greeks and the Saracens" (n. 14 above), 450, with further bibliography.

presence of local elites (more often than not playing a role in the fiscal-bureaucratic imperial machinery) who underpinned a sophisticated regional economy. At the same time, the island had a key position in the commercial network at the crossroads of different regional economies, within and beyond imperial boundaries.

Here—as in studies of Syria and Palestine by such scholars as Alan Walmsley—I am replacing an earlier concept of uniform decline with a more complex approach, recognizing that societies deal with continuity or change “through the construction of successful adaptive strategies, which have the effect of transforming and re-equipping existing social structures to deal with new realities.”²⁵⁸ To be sure, this interpretive approach needs further testing, which should come from further archaeological excavations—especially in the currently out-of-reach northern part of the island. One can, for instance, imagine what urban excavations in Lapithos-Lapta, Soloi, and above all Salamis-Constantia could yield. Would they show a level of economic activity comparable to that in Syrian and Palestinian cities, with different settlement foci exposing clusters of commercial and artisanal activities? Would the Cypriot capital reveal similarities to such island cities as Gortyn in Crete “in showing that demonumentalization and abandonment of classic amenities as set against substantial artisanal and retail activities, which took over the encroached public spaces and partitioned colonnades, resulted in different areas of settlement focused on new political and religious foci or ruined classic buildings?”²⁵⁹ Would a detailed analysis of Cypriot ceramics produced between the 650s and ca. 800 point to a hierarchy of fine, common, and coarse wares, or show continuity in complex local traditions and integration within a regional, subregional, and interregional network exchanging these goods across the Levant with common access to Cypriot Red Slip Wares?²⁶⁰

Though we cannot yet answer these questions, we can infer a degree of regional complexity (thanks

to a local concentration of landowning but urban-oriented aristocracy and the continuity of the fiscal system), in part because distance weakened the gravitational pull of Constantinople. Indeed, the above-mentioned similarities among the Byzantine islands of the western and eastern Mediterranean—in particular Cyprus, Sicily, and possibly Crete—in their political and administrative structures of power, their economic endurance, and their appurtenance to the Byzantine cultural sphere, suggest that they acted as a third political and economic pole between the Anatolian plateau and the Aegean sea in the Byzantine Mediterranean.²⁶¹ That pole should be regarded less as a peripheral focus than as an interconnection of different regional economies, which presupposed and maintained the wider system of interregional and intercultural communications that made possible the movement of goods, people, and information.²⁶² This role was played at least until the Arab conquests of Sicily and Crete at the beginning of the ninth century, which brought about the end of “more peaceable shipping along the route segments those two great islands dominated.”²⁶³ Cyprus would have commanded the easternmost sector of this set of Mediterranean platforms interlocking and connecting different regional economies, deriving benefit rather than harm from the rise of Islam in nearby Egypt, Syria, and Palestine.

In a sense, the apparent silence of the sources can be viewed as instead a background narrative that until recently has remained beyond our range of hearing, a narrative of a transition happening at different levels, both economic and not. After all, as Nicholas Mystikos wrote to the caliph al-Muqtadir at the beginning of the tenth century—unwittingly echoing a comment made by Willibald two centuries before—what the past, the present, and the future of Cyprus have in common is that the island has always been recognized as a sphere of interest shared between the Romans and the Saracens.²⁶⁴

258 Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria*, 147.

259 Zavagno, *Cities in Transition*, 235.

260 Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (n. 45 above), 770–80.

261 Ibid., 780–94.

262 McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 787.

263 Ibid., 787.

264 Nicholas Mystikos, *ep.* 102, ed. Jenkins and Westerink (n. 118 above), 525; cf. Hugeburc, *Vita Willibaldi* 1–2, see Talbot, *Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany* (n. 119 above), 161.